OLD SAN FRANCISCO

ALLIE LOWE MILES

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BY ALLIE LOWE MILES

Illustrated with scenes from Warner Bros. Photoplay
Starring **DOLORES COSTELLO**
With Warner Oland... Directed by ALAN CROSLAND

OP
1st Edition
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Mrs F.P. Harrington
Xmas 1927

(San Francisco)
"yellow peril"

OLD SAN FRANCISCO

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A Warner Bros. Production. *Old San Francisco.*

"REMEMBER, LOVELY CHILD, A VASQUEZ AVENGES A VASQUEZ!"

OLD SAN FRANCISCO

BASED ON THE MOTION PICTURE STORY

ADAPTED BY DARRYL FRANCIS ZANUCK

BY

ALLIE LOWE MILES

STARRING

DOLORES COSTELLO
WITH WARNER OLAND

ILLUSTRATED WITH SCENES
FROM THE PHOTOPLAY
A WARNER BROS. PRODUCTION

DIRECTED BY
ALAN CROSLAND

GROSSET & DUNLAP
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THE CAST

DIRECTED BY ALAN CROSLAND

THE CHARACTERS	THE PLAYERS
DOLORES VASQUEZ	Dolores Costello
CHRIS BUCKWELL	Warner Oland
TERRENCE O'SHAUGHNESSY	Chas. E. Mack
DON HERNANDEZ VASQUEZ	Joseph Swickard
DON LUIS	John Miljan
A PROMOTER	William Demarest
MICHAEL BRANDON	Anders Randolph
LU FONG	Sojin
DWARF	Angelo Rossitto
CHINESE GIRL	Anna May Wong
MADAME ROSE	Rose Dione

THE PROLOGUE

CAPTAIN ENRIQUE DE SOLANO Y VASQUEZ	Lawson Butt
VASQUEZ' GRANDSON	Otto Mattiesen
VASQUEZ' GRANDSON	Walter McGrail
MOTHER	Martha Mattox
CAPTAIN STONER	Tom Santschi

OLD SAN FRANCISCO

CHAPTER I

YEARS AGO

"I, ENRIQUE DE SOLANO Y VASQUEZ, on behalf of my sovereign lord, Philip, King of Spain, do hereby claim these lands and waters as his, to the glory of God and the crown of Castile."

This leader from Old Spain, resplendent in gold lace and handsome satins, sat astride his horse holding his mighty sword aloft by the blade with point downward so that it gave the effect of a cross.

It was a reverential and epoch making moment, that 27th day of June, 1776, when San Francisco was thus founded by the romantic Spaniards.

The officers were men of the highest rank, courageous adventurers who could surmount appalling obstacles without fear of disaster or suffering. Their cavalcade came through the virgin wilderness of California with a small band of Franciscan Padres, mule-

teers, Mission Indians, a few belongings, a hand full of settlers, many provisions and ninety head of cattle. They were intent upon reaching the shores of Monterey Bay and erecting a Mission there, but good fortune led them to another Harbor of far greater magnificence and splendor and on its shores they began to build Old San Francisco.

A glorious hill site rising from the glistening Ocean below! Although leagues away from their native land the Spaniards felt at home. California was theirs by right of discovery and possession. They had braved cruel hardships to gain her shores and were proud of their victorious conquest. The vast expanse of the Pacific had formerly been known to them as their own "Spanish Lake" and it would bring friends, commerce and prosperity to their very gates.

When the last echo of Enrique de Solano y Vasquez's words had died away in the vast stillness he slowly lowered his great sword and proudly read the Spanish inscription wrought in gold upon the ornate hilt.

"Vasquez
Ad majorem Dei gloriam
Vasquez, Vasquez, vindicat."

In the language of his new country it translated to:

Vasquez
For the greater glory of God
A Vasquez avenges a Vasquez.

Quickly dismounting Vasquez plunged his sword's long blade into the earth with a flourish and strength that would have killed the most powerful of foes.

Immediately the officers, soldiers and settlers dropped to their knees. The Padres raised reverent hands in benediction, hats were swept off and every head was bowed in prayer.

The setting sun added its warm blessing and then disappeared on its trip around the world. But it could not take away the glory or the importance of the day. The history of California had become a vital part of the history of civilization. Enrique de Solano y Vasquez had established the Presidio of San Francisco.

When the Spaniards found California for the white man they branded it with a romantic interest that generations of progress cannot destroy.

In those carefree days from 1776 to 1848

no one did any more work than was pleasing. The women were exceptionally lovely and there was never any cause for slander that could smirch their good names. The men were bold, proud, temperamental and gracefully idle.

Life was just one glorious procession of love making, gayety, visiting and cordial hospitality and the House of Vasquez was the most favored social center of all the aristocrats.

The picturesque hacienda, a huge, rambling, vine covered structure was on a hill that topped the vast estate. All the dreamy, indolent charm of Spain had been born again in its colorful architecture and romantic surroundings.

The adventurous soul of the first Vasquez had long since passed on and a dignified headstone, in the private burial plot adjoining the family Chapel, marked his grave. There were also six crosses in the little cemetery which indicated that there had been many sad hours to mar the pleasant merrymaking.

But finally all the pride and glory of the fiery conqueror had been handed down to two stalwart Grandsons who with their

Mother comprised the entire Vasquez line. Their valuable lands were secondary only to the honor of their cherished name.

The leisurely life and prosperity of the Vasquez family was suddenly uprooted on an apparently peaceful day in January, 1848.

They had no indication that a terrible tragedy was hovering over them. A sumptuous luncheon of wild game, wines and fruit was arranged on a magnificent silver service and placed before the three members of the household by as many faithful servants.

"The finest Madeira from Spain cannot surpass this wine from our own presses," modestly boasted the elder Vasquez draining his glass.

"You are right, my son," his Mother agreed, "and even now the peons are industriously gathering more grapes for this year's supply."

They looked through the great arched doorway off in the distance to where their extensive vineyards were being stripped of the season's luscious fruit.

"With your permission, my Mother, I will go out and see how the work is progressing."

The beautiful Spanish head nodded in assent, "Remember to return in time to welcome our guests!"

The elder Vasquez bowed low before his Mother and sauntered out through the archway.

The hacienda doors were already opened wide to receive a host of friends invited in for an afternoon and evening fiesta. Exquisite Spanish shawls and elaborate throws had been strewn across chairs to protect the ladies' silken gowns. For a whole week the servants had been preparing rare and delicious delicacies. The spacious bubbling fountain in the courtyard was filled with sparkling water—waiting to reflect the gayety and chance flirtations that would be mirrored in its depths when romantic night settled down. Even the plumed cockatoo, swinging in its ring, was puffing out its feathers in best holiday fashion.

But unfortunately none of these preparations or possible pleasures were destined to be enjoyed.

Disloyalty, Disaster, Tragedy and Death were to be the Vasquez's only visitors and Fate was sending them on long before the appointed hour.

CHAPTER II

THE GOLD RUSH

A HORSEMAN galloped madly along the winding roadway and into the patio at breakneck speed, his voice rang out in loud excited shouts above the clatter of his pony's feet.

The elder Vasquez stopped on the vineyard path and ceased stroking his great hound's friendly head.

Mother and younger son, Don Hernandez, left the luncheon table in alarm and rushed into the patio.

The peons threw down their old fashioned scythes and came running from the wheat fields, the vineyards and gardens.

Pulling the pony to an abrupt halt that lifted him high on his hind legs, the horseman waved a flask in mid air and yelled:

"Gold! Gold! There's been a gold strike at Sutter's Mill on the American River." The flask that he waved in exultation was filled with a wealth of dust for all to see.

"The River is running with gold—the hills are ribbed with it!"

No sooner was the arresting announcement made than he put spurs to his horse and dashed away and off to spread the news still farther.

"Gold!" gasped Don Hernandez in unsuppressed eagerness, smiling happily at his brother.

But the head of the house replied sadly, "No, my brother, a gold rush is to be deplored. Gold awakens greed and lust—it spares no one—our laborers will leave—it will mean a social upheaval."

The youth's enthusiasm waned with his smile. He had thought only of the adventure and nothing of the disastrous consequences.

But his Mother knew and sighed, "Gold and money mean so little, my sons, they cannot buy dreams, a good name and peace."

However, these fine immaterial niceties of life meant nothing to red blooded men. Practically every able bodied male in the state, thrilled with the news and prospect of gold, pulled up stakes and hit the trail to Sutter's Mill. That is, with the exception of the Spaniards who with their usual

love of lazy indolence and ease failed to join the new progressive enterprise or soil their aristocratic fingers in gold digging.

As soon as the news was passed on by galloping horsemen the gold rush became an actuality.

Unwilling to admit the menace Señora Vasquez turned into the hacienda with her sons. Their guests were due, shortly, and they must be ready to extend every hospitality.

No sooner had they left the patio than a faithful peon came running in breathlessly and stopped before them to whisk off his soiled cap and gasp in great agitation: "In the stable yard señor—Captain Stoner and his sailor men—steal your horses!"

"The fiends!" snapped Vasquez angrily.

Don Hernandez agitated by an equal anger leaped to his feet and raced headlong down the stairs. It was a call to arms!

"Wait, my brother," called the elder, "I am the head of the house of Vasquez! You remain with our Mother and leave weighty matters to me."

With this reminder he disappeared in the house. Hardly a moment elapsed before he returned brandishing the great sword of

the Vasquez. The same splendid blade that had been plunged into San Francisco ground by their illustrious ancestor 72 years earlier.

Don Hernandez was crestfallen and disappointed at being denied a chance to share in the excitement and avenge their name, but obedience to the head of the family had always been the first law of Spanish life. He reluctantly remained at his Mother's side.

Coming around the building with grim determined step the elder brother halted at sight of such feverish activity in the stable yard.

A gruff, burly, bewhiskered man of forty was Captain Stoner and he appeared as much in command of the situation as if he had been on the bridge of his ship at sea.

"You greasy swabs!" he thundered at the terrified peons, "throw some saddles on those horses' backs and tighten up the belly straps!"

They cowered before this verbal lash and waited upon the impatient Captain and his sailors like helpless galley slaves.

One loyal and courageous little servant grasped the bridle of his Master's favorite horse when he saw that Captain Stoner was

about to mount and ride him away without permission.

"Spawn of the Devil!" cursed Stoner, "cast off!" and he knocked the peon backward with a cruel blow.

The helpless heap of abused humanity rolled and fell unconscious at Vasquez's feet.

"Captain Stoner! What does this mean?" demanded the young master, his Spanish eyes flashing with righteous fury.

"It means we've worked for you long enough." Stoner eyed his youthful employer with deadly calm. "You'll find your ship at anchor in the bay. We've resigned and are taking our pay in horses—understand?"

The sailors, mounted on saddled steeds, gave mute evidence of the fact.

Like a true son of a long line of proud aristocrats Vasquez stood his ground, "Stoner, you forget that I am the head of the House of Vasquez." His eyes took on a deadly glint. "I order you to replace my property and return to your ship at once."

He waited with all the assurance of a small child who has asked a cow to give him a glass of milk and is surprised when his bidding is not immediately obeyed.

"You jellyfish!" hissed Stoner in contempt, "we're going to the gold fields and you can't stop us—this is a new era—the world's turned upside down, and now you and your family glory don't mean a damn thing."

A quick intake of breath was followed by an amazed silence and Vasquez stood stunned by Stoner's defiance.

"All aboard for the gold fields men!" signalled the Captain and his sailors climbed into their saddles.

Vasquez suddenly regained his senses and sprang into the archway to bar their departure with his body.

"You will not leave the Vasquez estate on stolen horses unless you ride me down." It was a grand gesture, devoid of all pretense and show—he meant it. The sun shone blindingly on the famous Vasquez sword as he held it high in his outflung arm.

The sailors pulled in their horses to a dead stop and eyed their Captain inquiringly.

Stoner did not mount, but his mind was made up. The defiance of a romantic Spaniard was not going to alter his plans. Whipping out a pistol he fired—in cold blood—at

the brave youth who was defending property and name with his very life.

A blood red spot grew on the breast of Vasquez's soft white shirt. He swayed on his feet. His left hand crept up—not to ease the pain but to stop his life's blood from oozing out until he had had a chance to prove that his eyes could still see and that his right hand was still strong and true enough to avenge the insult.

The report of Stoner's cowardly shot echoed in Señora Vasquez's heart. Instinctively she knew that it had found its mark in her son. Don Hernandez heard it too and without hesitancy rushed around the hacienda eager to take his place beside his brother.

Back in the stable yard the peon laborers and vaqueros were huddled together in fear and trembling, the sailors were stunned into silence, but Captain Stoner—a leer upon his big loose lips—blew through the smoking barrel of his revolver with gloating satisfaction.

Summoning the last bit of his remaining strength Vasquez lunged toward Stoner with drawn sword. His mouth, distorted with pain, opened pitifully to cry out, "A Vasquez avenges a Vasquez!" but the strain was

too great and he fell tottering to the tiled floor.

It was at this moment that young Don Hernandez gained the stable yard. His intense fury must have shown in his face because the sailors suddenly spurred their stolen horses and galloped through the arch and away, leaving Stoner to face the consequences of his own brutality.

Stoner realized he had gone too far to retreat. One look into the young white face staring at him across the bullet torn body was sufficient to urge action. Clumsily swinging into the saddle he headed for the open road, cocked pistol in hand. With only a few yards between them he fired at this last remaining son of the house of Vasquez! But his mount stumbled and the deadly shot lodged in the earth.

Livid with fury young Vasquez grabbed a lariat from the belt of a vaquero standing at his side and whirling it skillfully over head let it coil through the intervening space, faster than a running horse, until it settled around Captain Stoner's body. Immediately he was jerked from the saddle and fell with a surprised thump to the ground.

Working laboriously Vasquez pulled the body through the archway to his fallen brother's side and stood looking down upon the two men with his emotions torn between love and hatred.

"You have killed a Vasquez!" It was no longer a boy speaking.

Stoner closed his eyes and shuddered at the cold, cruel expression on his captor's face; and a shiver of fear went through him when he noted, from under half closed lids, that young Vasquez bent over his brother's bleeding body and gently took the sword from clenched fingers.

For a brief moment a spark of recognition came back into the dying man's eyes and a smile of understanding and love passed between the two brothers. That last good-by gave the youth renewed courage. His hand tightened around the sword. Holding it up he read from the inscription, "A Vasquez avenges a Vasquez."

He belonged to the breed of men who cannot glory in cowardly revenge. Solemnly eyeing his bound adversary he cut the lariat with his sword's tip.

Surprised at leing released, but not man enough to accept it honorably, Stoner rolled

over on his stomach and under cover of turning stealthily pulled his pistol. Leaping to his feet he whirled around and fired without warning.

Blood appeared on Don Hernandez's forehead and trickled slowly down his cheek. With all the ferocity of a wild animal disturbed in his lair he thrust out and drove his sword into Captain Stoner's cowardly body with fatal accuracy.

The Captain staggered as if tossed on a storm-washed deck. His pistol fell from lifeless fingers and he sank to the ground.

Vasquez watched the death throes, coldly, dispassionately; then wiping off his blade crossed to his brother's inert form and knelt, bowed in grief, with one hand pressed affectionately against the lifeless shoulder.

"Gone!" he sobbed and swallowed tears of grief.

The peons and vaqueros, who had been standing by in awed silence, crossed themselves. Their master's soul had passed on to join his ancestors! One peon slipped away to the chapel and began fumbling with the bell ropes.

Señora Vasquez, with head erect had watched the whole scene from the time her

young son had whirled the lariat. She knew that her first born was dead. She watched with unflinching eyes while her last boy fought so valiantly to avenge their name. When the fight was over she calmly joined her sons and laying a gentle hand on the living boy's head said bravely, "You have done well, my son—A Vasquez avenges a Vasquez!" Through tear-blurred eyes she looked beyond to their burial plot and saw the graves and crosses of other Vasquezes who had gone before. Ah, death did have a sting and her mother's heart felt its cruel torture!

The little chapel bells rang mournfully and guests on their way to the Vasquez estate, turned back, or came on only to offer sympathy.

And all through the night the chapel bells tolled their sad news.

* * * * * * *

Adventurous ruffians from all parts of the world began congregating in California to dig for their pot of gold; and San Francisco, the peaceful little home of the Romantic Spaniards, became a seething caldron of crazed activity. Houses were looted, stores were deserted and Stoner was not the only Captain to leave his ship.

Men gambled and consumed liquor in the rough carefree spirit of mining camp life. In short the Spanish village had become the mecca of a gold-mad world. The harbor was crowded with ships of all descriptions and many nationalities, and on the shores a myriad of tents appeared to shelter the shifting population. Frame shacks were erected over night and when not used as homes served as supply bases for tools and provisions.

A regular procession almost constantly passed by the Vasquez estate and Don Hernandez, the new Master of the House, was wont to watch from the balcony with folded arms and a frown upon his face, but in his heart was a boyish restlessness that was difficult to suppress. Señora Vasquez was always slightly contemptuous of the rabble and hated the rush because its lustful influence had been responsible for her son's death. Her aristocratic breeding and love for beauty made her senses rebel against the sight of wagons loaded with camping outfits, kitchen utensils, household furnishings and unkempt, red flannel shirted men as they passed her door and ruined the beautiful serenity of life. To her it was obnoxious to

be forced to see Mexicans, Indians, negroes, splendid white men and Chinks all pawning their lot together and going off to the fields like brothers.

The Señora could not understand why women would give up an easy, pleasant life to follow their wandering husbands to the new gold territory and she never ceased to be amazed at the sight of husbands and wives struggling along under the weight of heavy packs and dragging young children by the hands in their effort to make speed.

Vasquez and his Mother were literally sitting on their door step watching the world go by. A world peopled by creatures so remote in ambitions and desires from their own high-minded and chivalrous instincts that there was no mutual ground of understanding.

For instance, they saw a hard-faced "Madam" drive past with a bevy of painted girls. Reckless followers of the gold diggers sitting on chairs in the wagon bed. One of them called, waved and smirked to get the attention of two men on another wagon, who were straddling a board and playing cards while they jogged along. The game was held up to return the salute and while

an especially smitten male lingered longer than necessary over the salutation his opponent stealthily reached across, grabbed a couple of gold pieces from the pot and drained the joint bottle of whiskey. The amorous one turned back to the game just in time to realize he had been cheated. Out came his knife in an instant and he leaped up with a volley of curses. They clinched and staggered about the moving wagon until it hit a rut and threw them sprawling into the roadside. Still clinched they rolled around until contact with a deep mud puddle brought them to their senses. Yelling at the driver they ran after their departing wagon amid the boisterous laughter and jeers of the painted girls.

All life was not like that during the Gold Rush but unfortunately the Vasquezes' secluded existence prevented their knowing about the big and generous things that occurred. The romance of the California Gold Diggers was just as great, in its way, as the Romance of Spain's own early explorations and settlement.

* * * * * * *

Fifty-eight years had passed since that memorable day of '48, which was the real

beginning of San Francisco's prosperity. The city grew until it became the commercial capital of the west coast. The lawless days of the gold rush had become only slightly more circumspect, and at the beginning of the twentieth century it was a joyous pleasure loving city—the "Bohemia" of America. The "Paris" of the Pacific.

Gambling was rife and glittering dance halls flourished. The "Barbary Coast" and the famous "Cocktail Route" were the rendezvous of notables and the haunt of convivial characters. Blazing electric signs threw out their glow of welcome to all—rich and poor alike—the sinner and the saint. "Campi's," "Cæsar's," "Neptune," "Midway," "Thalia," "Pup," "Fly Trap," and "The Poodle Dog," all paid their tribute in gold to a city government that was honeycombed with graft.

And just a few blocks away, yet separated by centuries of creed and custom was Chinatown—the capital of California's fifty thousand Chinese population. All the lure of the East was there with little that was good and much that was evil. Gambling rooms, opium dens, stores that were legitimately business, and houses whose business was il-

legitimate—all were centered in this section that outwardly was under civil jurisdiction but actually not at all governed by its laws and ordinances. Chinatown flourished, nevertheless, and flourished well for it too paid its golden tribute.

But even as San Francisco over-prospered and was well on the way to fulfill the brilliant destiny that was before her, the glory of the ancient Spanish founders grew dim. Their indolent lives, the traditional love of comfort that had been handed down from one generation to another could not or would not compete with the active, growing civilization that was creeping upon them from the city below.

At the old Vasquez ranch high in the hills overlooking not only the encroaching city but the bay beyond and even the Farralon Islands in the dim distance, the last male descendant of the illustrious line held desperately to the ancestral acres.

Don Hernandez Vasquez, now in his seventies, had become a white-haired, dignified old aristocrat. He was still eloquent in manner with all the pride of the old Spanish nobility and to his sorrow he had seen the ranches and traditions of his old neigh-

bors go, one by one, into the insatiable maw of the city.

As he stood on the hillside, leaning on a gold-topped cane, gazing at the vast acreage that spread before him, he shook his head sadly. The end was inevitable. The rancho was pitiful by comparison to its previous splendor. The land was still there to be sure. But what land! Overrun with scrubby growth, uncultivated, wild, it lay, a tragic and silent monument of the past.

His wandering glance finally took in the famous old ranch house. That too was but a symbol of the decay that had been going on for more years than he liked to remember. The walls were cracked and half covered with moss. Here and there huge gaps showed in the masonry, and over it all the vines had run riot; around it the shrubbery had grown wild.

He walked slowly toward the house with a shrug of his aristocratic shoulders. What was to be must be! He was living in the present but not of it. As he neared the patio his expression suddenly changed into one of enthusiasm and anticipation. Here at least was something that pleased him mightily.

The clicking of castanets, beautifully

timed to the soft thrumming of a guitar, reached his ear. His eyes sparkled brightly and he leaned against the doorway watching the delightful scene that brought back a breath of the picturesque past.

Dolores Vasquez, the granddaughter of the rancho was dancing. Her long full skirts cleared the flags of the patio and revealed daintily shod feet as she whirled. Her lovely head held proud and high nodded to the music's rhythm. Her beautiful eyes flashed merrily and her lips parted to smile at the faithful old peon who accompanied her on the guitar.

Lounging lazily on a rustic bench, gazing at Dolores through half closed eyes as he puffed carelessly on a cigarette, sat Don Luis, her very ardent admirer. Don Luis de Costanso was a Twentieth century caballero dressed in the height of fashion but nevertheless adhering as closely as possible to his ancestral influence. He sported a small, trim, waxed moustache which seemed a fitting climax to his high heeled boots, elaborate silk scarf and broad brimmed hat. Altogether he was exceedingly good to look upon—according to Don Luis.

"Why do you not smile at me Dolores?"

he objected as she continued to fling her entrancing smiles over her shoulder to the old peon who beamed on her with adoration as he strummed a gay Spanish air.

Dolores did not answer at once but continued dancing toward her Grandfather whom she had just noticed in the doorway.

As old Hernandez watched the charming picture his heart swelled with pride. Here was a Vasquez who was the fairest of them all. And as for Don Luis—well was he not the son of an old friend and a fitting mate for his precious Dolores? But then she had a way with her and even his experienced eyes could not determine anything but friendship for Don Luis in the actions of his granddaughter; he wanted to see love.

It was not always so. In his younger days the señoritas did not behave so calmly in the presence of a suitor. And once again his thoughts carried him back into the past. Back to the time when the very same patio echoed to the shouts and laughter of a dozen señoritas and as many dashing young Spaniards—some of them dancing as his own Dolores—others on the balcony singing and applauding.

Ah! but it was hard to grow old—in poverty.

As Dolores finished the dance she blew a kiss from her dainty fingertips and made a deep curtsy before him. Then as he continued to smile sadly she laid her hand consolingly on his arm and said, "Don't worry, dear—some day we shall live again in the glory that has gone."

Vasquez shook his head sadly, "No, my dear, the past is gone and the glory and fame of the Vasquezes have gone with it."

She looked at him pityingly for a moment, then her face brightened with a happy idea. Laughing gayly she pirouetted before him, saying, "See! I shall always dance and make you think of the great fiesta you love to speak of—when you first met my grandmother." Wrapping her mantilla about her she began an old-fashioned Spanish dance. Alone in the great open patio by the fountain she danced for her strangely assorted audience of three men. Her Grandfather, a young Spanish suitor and an aged servant. Yet no dance on the stage could have been filled with more allure and unconscious charm than Dolores's. Nor could any actress have made a more appealing or definite

impression on her audience. It vividly recalled the Grandfather's youth, it aroused Don Luis' smoldering passions and it made the old peon very proud to serve so lovely a mistress.

Snapping off a rose as she danced past a bush of great crimson beauties Dolores brought her dance to an end and tossed the blossom to her Grandfather with a smile and kiss wafted from her finger tips.

Don Luis sprang gracefully to his feet and catching the rose in mid air took possession of it.

"That was not for you!" objected Dolores.

"Sweet Señorita," he pleaded ardently, "be a little kind. I must start back home now—tell me when I may come again?" His eyes did not leave her face and the rose was held securely in his slender hand.

"Give me the flower, or you may *never* come again." She waited imperiously.

"Your will is mine!" and bowing low he returned the red rose to her with such a good grace that she flashed him her most winning smile of friendly forgiveness.

"Come when you please—you know Grandfather likes to have you."

"And you? Are you perhaps a little glad when I come?"

"A little—yes." Then when she saw how hurt he appeared she added quickly, "Come often, as you always have, we *both* like to have you."

Don Luis could not determine whether her interest in him was mere politeness or something warmer controlled by her rigid ideas of girlish modesty. But to him it did not matter—he wanted her because—

"I shall say adios, dear Señorita," he said, bowing low over her hand, "and hurry away so there will be no delay in returning to you again!"

After bidding farewell to old Vasquez, Don Luis went to the stable yard for his horse and took a short route to the city.

CHAPTER III

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

After watching Don Luis depart for San Francisco, Dolores turned toward the archway and noticed that two men were observing her from the private driveway in front of the hacienda. She shrank back in embarrassment and concealed herself behind a bower of roses. But it was too late. They had been watching the little scene since she danced for her supposed audience of three.

One man was Michael Brandon, a heavy set, well-groomed, pugnacious individual who resembled a well-cared-for bulldog that was full of fight and ready to attack on the slightest provocation. By profession he was a lawyer and represented a powerful faction in San Francisco. His purpose in life was to make money, regardless of individual rights or the law he knew so well how to get around. It is not quite just to credit Brandon with all bad qualities, yet he probably deserved the classification as he took pains

to conceal the good traits that were a childhood inheritance.

The other uninvited caller was his nephew, Terrance O'Shaughnessy. Only fine things could be said about Terry. The untimely, accidental death of his Father left him alone, and when affairs were being settled he came across a written request to the effect that in the event of any kind of trouble he was to appeal to his Mother's wealthy lawyer brother in San Francisco. Thus it developed that Brandon settled the estate and took Terry into the law office.

Terry was only twenty-three and still believed there were many worthwhile things in the world besides money and graft. His admiration for the vivid Spanish girl dancing in the patio was a case in point.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed, as much to himself as to his Uncle. "I—I never saw anyone more beautiful!"

Brandon shot him a swift glance, "That's what's the matter with these foreigners," he shifted his long cigar to the other side of his mouth, "Always dreaming and play acting, and never 'tending to business." Brandon's eyes roved speculatively over the neglected rancho.

"Why worry about business when you can watch a girl like that?" Terry was more alert at detecting feminine charm than in recognizing a good business proposition.

"Humph!" ejaculated Brandon in disgust, "Women can always spend money—but they don't help you make it—leave 'em alone, boy!"

When Vasquez returned from the stable yard after seeing Don Luis off on his horse he was surprised to find Dolores trying to signal to him from her place of concealment beside the rose bush. Following her excited hand-waving he looked through the archway and saw the cause of her alarm.

Visitors were most infrequent at the rancho, but Vasquez instinctively felt that the newcomers were gentlemen. Immediately he became the courteous, dignified old grandee welcoming his guests.

"Señors! Won't you come in?" he called cordially.

As Dolores saw the men approach she was seized with sudden panic. They had spied while she danced and she had a timidity about meeting them. Like a frightened deer looking about for a means of escape she darted up the steps to the overhanging bal-

cony where, unseen by the men below, she proceeded to do the very thing she had just criticised in the strangers.

"Welcome, Señors," greeted Vasquez, bowing low.

Brandon acknowledged the salutation by removing his cigar, "I have come on a matter of important business, which I am sure will be greatly to your advantage," he announced importantly, presenting his card.

Vasquez examined it meaninglessly. A card meant nothing to him, he much preferred the warm clasp of a friendly hand.

"This is my nephew, Mr. O'Shaughnessy," introduced Brandon.

Vasquez again bowed politely.

Terry wanted to offer his hand, but a little awed by the old man's grand manner, could only nod; besides he was wondering what became of the beautiful dancer. She had disappeared as quickly and mysteriously as the lovely worshiped fairies of his own native Ireland.

"We will be more comfortable inside," suggested Vasquez waving his guests into the spacious living room.

As they disappeared beneath the balcony Dolores came down the steps, stealthily, and

watched them enter the hacienda. Without knowing why, or what she was singing, a song burst from her heart. She had discovered that the young stranger was interesting and exceedingly good to look upon.

The dimmed elegance of the fine old living room was illuminated by candles that gleamed brighter than their heavy silver candelabra in the mid afternoon light. The flickering glow cast beautiful and fantastic shadows on the heavy draperies, massive furniture and large portraits of noble Vasquezes of Old Spain. Splendid trophies of the chase and an extensive collection of arms with the famous Vasquez sword in a place of honor above the wide fireplace made no impression whatever on Brandon. Slumped carelessly in a big chair he looked across at the stiff formality of his host and announced abruptly:

"Well, let's get down to brass tacks. I'm going to buy your ranch." He twisted his cigar between firm teeth and watched Vasquez narrowly.

The report of a cannon in the peaceful quiet of the room could not have been more startling. Vasquez stiffened and his vein ribbed hands clutched the arm of his chair.

Such a proposition was inevitable. His extensive acres were too valuable to be overlooked by promotors in San Francisco. But he hated to sell. The rancho boundaries were the only ones he had ever known. They were the ancestral stronghold of the Vasquez family and he loved all their past glories and present deteriorating magnificence. The rancho was like himself—old—but that was no reason it should be disposed of.

"Let us not hurry, señor," Vasquez managed to say; he even smiled as if Brandon's crude manner of putting the matter must be overlooked. "To a Vanquez, business is never so important as hospitality to his guests."

The same peon who had accompanied Dolores on the guitar entered at this moment with a cob web covered bottle from which he filled three exquisite wine glasses. He handled the bottle with a reverence almost amounting to veneration. The ceremony over, he withdrew.

"To your health, señors!" toasted Vasquez. He sipped his wine in keen enjoyment.

Terry followed his example with a deep

A Warner Bros. Production. *Old San Francisco*

DON HERNANDEZ CHALLENGES HIS TREACHEROUS PERSECUTOR.

respect for the old grandee's courtly manner and traditional background; but Brandon drained his glass at a gulp, rested his arms on the table and said:

"Well, let's go. I have some papers here—."

Terry had been searching for an excuse to return to the patio and find the dancer. His uncle's statement offered a pretense and he seized it.

"Your papers are in the brief case—in the carriage—I'll get them," he interrupted and rising hastily backed toward the patio door.

"Never mind," said Brandon impatiently, "It is not necessary—I have all I need for the present."

But Terry was determined to see more of the girl if he could find her. "It is no trouble at all," he insisted and grabbing his hat rushed out into the patio, immediately dismissing all thought of the brief case. He paused and looked around for "the Spanish dancing girl." She was nowhere to be seen. In annoyed disappointment he sauntered over to the fountain and from the wide tiled edge idly picked up Dolores' gayly decorated guitar that the peon left when he finished accompanying her in the dance.

While bending over the clear fountain pool he saw a vision mirrored in its depth that held him spellbound with admiration. The girl he sought was stealthily watching from the balcony above as she leaned far over the railing.

Terry knew that the fairest colleen of all Ireland could not compare with her in beauty and sweet allurement.

He drew back and smiled at the memory of her lovely reflection in the water. Then straightening up, with the guitar in his hands, he began strumming and as he played he turned casually toward the balcony, pretending he had no idea anyone was there. Like the Pied Piper of Hamlin his music lured Dolores from the vine covered retreat and with eager interest she listened and admired with sparkling eyes.

Terry moved closer and closer to the balcony as he played and then, when he was directly beneath her, he suddenly looked up, smiled mockingly and caught her by surprise.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, starting nervously. There was no time to retreat. She was conscious of blushing, but not of her smile.

"Señorita, come down—please!" coaxed Terry.

Dolores said, "No!" very faintly but shook her head vigorously.

"Come and play for me," he pleaded holding out the guitar invitingly, "I can only strum. Play "Spanish Moonlight." I have always wanted to hear it by someone who knew how—I am sure you do," he flattered irresistibly.

By good Irish luck he had mentioned her favorite air. She hesitated only a moment and then with a mischievous laugh, because she knew she was doing wrong, Dolores ran lightly down the steps and held out both hands for the instrument.

Terry gave it to her automatically. Her beauty was like the vivid, fresh fragrance of a gorgeous flower. He wanted to draw nearer and touch her to make sure she was real, yet was afraid his very presence would blemish her exquisiteness. For a moment the world stood still, his temples throbbed and her loveliness filled every convolution of his brain. His heart beat wildly as if rejoicing that its mate had been found. Terry knew something had happened to him, but at the moment he was not sane enough to call it by its right name "LOVE."

"And to think I have never seen you before!" he sighed in regret.

Dolores glanced at him quickly from the corner of her eyes, "I came to play for you—not talk," she reminded, all unconscious of the coquettish look in her eyes, and sitting beside the fountain she dutifully began the opening cords of "Spanish Moonlight."

For a long, sweet moment neither spoke. Finally Terry's admiring gaze made Dolores raise her head until their eyes met and held.

"What is your name?" he asked softly in time with the music.

"Dolores—I am named after the Dolores Mission that used to be called 'Old San Francisco de Assis.'"

Terry nodded in approval. He felt that no name he had ever heard could have suited her better. "Call me 'Terry' will you?" he asked earnestly.

"I'll try," and for the first time Dolores looked away from his eyes. It made her feel just a little lonely.

She wondered what would happen if her Grandfather came out and found her talking with a strange young man who had not been properly presented. However, she dismissed all thought of sending him away. Nothing quite as exciting as their meeting had ever happened at the rancho before.

Dolores knew she should not feel that way about an unconventional thing, but she did!

"I have never seen you in town—Dolores," Terry's voice broke into her thoughts, "Where do you go when you come in?"

"I have never been to San Francisco, señor," replied Dolores a bit regretfully, then she paused to recall how his voice sounded when he said her name. She liked it. "We Vasquez are Spanish you know," she continued, "Our women remain at home."

"That seems unreasonable," Terry frowned his indignation at the secluded custom, "The town is glorious! Haven't you even seen its theatres, its wonderful cafés—its famous Cocktail Route?"

"No—none of them." She had often thought she would like to go and had spent many a solitary twilight hour dreaming about what town life was like.

"It is unbelievable!" and Terry launched forth in a description of the Old San Francisco that was so near her home and which tradition prevented her enjoying.

As he chatted on with increasing animation, Dolores stole several furtive glances.

Her admiration was obvious. She quickly turned away to avoid his direct scrutiny. He suddenly forgot what he was saying and just looked at her, dumbly. She glanced back and their eyes met once more. Both laughed, a little embarrassed. Dolores recovered herself first.

"I live in a world apart from all that," she said shaking her dainty head, "I am afraid this paradise you speak of would never accept me."

"You are mistaken. It would worship you!"

Dolores liked Terry's flattery but it was embarrassing. Bending over her guitar to hide crimson cheeks she finished the song in record time and put the instrument aside to pick a red rose bud.

"May I have it?" Terry held out his hand.

"It is *red,* señor!" Dolores' tone implied "it is forbidden."

"I know—I like red," his hand was below hers holding the stem.

"But a Vasquez gives a red rose only to the man she loves." There was no coquettry in her remark.

"Then I must win it from you—please—

I want it, because I—" Terry choked and could not finish. He had spoken very softly as if afraid of his own boldness. He watched her breathlessly.

Without knowing why she obeyed, Dolores let go of the stem and the red rose of love was in Terry's possession!

The spirit of youth enveloped Dolores and the stranger friend who in a few short moments had become something more. A glorious, elusive veil of Romance seemed to settle around their throbbing hearts and made them strangely happy and contented in the old Spanish patio.

* * * * * * *

Back in the living room Brandon had not made the desired progress with Vasquez. He puffed disgustedly on his cigar for a moment then drew a paper from a deep breast pocket, opened it with a flourish and leaning far over the table passed it on for Vasquez's inspection. His manner was that of an aggressive business man closing a big deal. He was confident that the figures representing the offer would be accepted immediately.

"It is an enormous price, far more than the place is worth, but my client is generous

when he wants anything," lied Brandon. "Will you sign now?"

Vasquez had listened intently from the beginning, although his attitude remained stiff and unbending. He needed the money, yet the place meant so much to him; also he felt that it would bely a trust to dispose of his ancestral holdings. He did not know what to say; perhaps it is just as well he did not attempt speech because he was almost overcome with suppressed emotion and a lump was in his throat.

"Why you simply can't refuse to sell at that price," thundered Brandon, banging his fist on the table, "It's ridiculous!"

Vanquez's brows puckered in annoyance. Bandon's manner irritated him more than the proposition and he looked away from the scrutinizing eyes that were trying so hard to hold his attention. The room was filled with pleasant old memories. It would be *hard* to give up everything he had cherished just for the sake of money, yet with Dolores to be provided for he must not think of himself. He shook his head sadly, regretting all that he would lose and miss.

Brandon mistook the motion for a refusal to sell. His lips tightened grimly and a

nasty look came into his eyes. "I know you're broke, Vasquez, and I also know you're only holding out from damned stubborn pride."

A quick intake of breath, almost like a sob, escaped Vasquez's lips, but he did not speak. His eyes glittered angrily at such coarse familiarity from a stranger.

"It won't do you any good to refuse this offer," continued Brandon, tapping the paper significantly, "If you do you'll lose the place anyhow. The man I represent is influential enough to have your old land grants declared invalid. Better sell now and be done with it."

Vasquez was speechless with rage. He looked upon Brandon's threat as a challenge. A moment before he would have sold for Dolores' sake, but after Brandon's insult he could not sell without loss of pride. With a mighty effort he mastered his feelings, arose and drew himself up to his full height. He looked down upon Brandon.

"He who seeks to intimidate a Vasquez is either a stranger in this land or a fool!" he stated proudly. "You may tell your client that I will *never* sell at *any* price."

Without waiting for the lawyer's bewil-

derment to permit a reply he pulled the bell rope, summoning his servant.

"Your hat, señor!" he said with a decided air of finality.

Brandon realized that he had been dismissed. With a rude jerk he accepted his hat from the servant and scowling furiously stormed out into the patio.

"Very well, *señor,*" he called back tauntingly, "You refuse to sell your broken down ranch, so we shall proceed to *take* it! Come on, Terrance!" he commanded as he saw Terry sitting beside the pool with Dolores, "We're leaving."

Reluctantly the young man followed his uncle to the carriage. Before stepping in he looked back at Dolores, "Wonderful!" he exclaimed rapturously.

"Wonderful, hell!" ejaculated Brandon sitting down angrily, "He's an old fool!"

Terry sighed and pressed his hand against a moist red rose but that was perfuming his breast pocket. His uncle never seemed to understand.

The carriage rolled away but Terry did not forget to look back for a last glimpse of Dolores as she stood beside her Grandfather.

Brandon was not at all concerned with Terry's thoughts being centered on the young girl of the rancho, nor did he bother to recall that although they had not been introduced they were sitting together beside the fountain, very much absorbed in each other, when he came out from his unsatisfactory interview. The incident made no impression on Brandon because it had nothing to do with money. He was already mentally preparing a report, for his chief, in which Vasquez was to be described as a "blithering idiot."

Close to the hacienda, Vasquez and Dolores watched the departing carriage. Their thoughts were as far apart as is possible for two people who were so fond of each other.

"Bah, what a swine," breathed Vasquez in a cold voice through stern set lips, "I feel that the hacienda has been defiled by his presence."

Aroused from her own pleasant thoughts Dolores looked at her Grandfather. She was hurt and surprised by his remark, "But he—Oh!" as it dawned on her whom he meant, "But, Grandaddy, the *young* señor was quite nice."

Fortunately Vasquez did not even hear.

He was thinking of Brandon's threat. His fighting blood had been aroused and he determined not to give in. Squaring slender shoulders he stalked away to plan what would be the best procedure when the unknown grafter tried to take his beloved rancho away from him, the last male descendant of the Vasquez line either in Spain or America.

Dolores looked down the road until the cloud of dust from Terry's carriage had scattered in the air. Her luscious full lips were curled in a gentle smile. She was sure that he would come again and blushed modestly at her own boldness in wishing that it would be very soon.

CHAPTER IV

THE CZAR OF THE TENDERLOIN

San Francisco's Chinatown was an acute and growing problem to certain of the city bosses. Its ever-increasing prosperity was a golden river of privilege money constantly flowing into the pockets of the political ring, but its six tong rulers were a decided menace to their peace of mind. Their wealth and power were a factor to be feared.

Of all the bosses who waxed fat and prosperous from the privilege pickings, Chris Buckwell—the Czar of the Tenderloin was the greediest and most cruel. He had risen from obscurity to the very pinnacle of power and as the leader of San Francisco's political ring and king of the underworld, was ruthless in his persecution of the Chinese.

Picture if you can a person, stocky, heavy-shouldered, with a forehead like a Greek bard and a face like Mephistopheles, and long magnetic eyes of piercing blackness. Imbue this man with all the Cunning of the

East and the sophistication of the West in one shrewd intellect and you have a fairly accurate mental picture of Chris Buckwell.

As he sat in his living room, his hand resting on the table he was the personification of power—at its worst. He idly drummed with his fingers as he gazed out of the window. Obviously he was waiting for someone. A gentle tapping on the paneled wall brought him cautiously to his feet. Tiptoeing across the room he pressed a hidden button in the wainscoting, a portion of the wall slid back noiselessly and a girl wrapped in a huge silken shawl stepped into the room.

With a word of caution Buckwell went to the door and locked it. As the girl removed the shawl she stood revealed in all the lovely silken allurement of the East. Evidently a half-caste with all the seductiveness and charm that only the orient can produce, her complexion was as softly pink as a peach bloom, her big questioning eyes revealed nothing but mystery in their hidden depths.

Buckwell turned briskly from the door and said, "What is it you want? Speak quickly! There's a delegation from Chinatown due here any minute."

"That is it. I came to warn you. All Chinatown is in a furor. They all say that this time you have gone too far. Lu Fong, their leader, has spoken the word. They will kill you if you do not ease up on your demands." Her voice came soft and low like the whispering of a spring wind through the willows.

For a moment Buckwell was startled out of his usual calm. His face paled and his eyes took on a squinty slant that gave him a queer oriental look, entirely foreign to his usual appearance. It was gone in a second and he was again the strong masterful leader—the demigod of the underworld.

"All right San Toy. I'll be careful. Thanks for the warning. I won't forget it." He seemed entirely oblivious to the alluring charm of his visitor. Perhaps it was because something more momentous was pending, or it may have been that the charm had long since lost its ability to please.

San Toy was disappointed. She clearly showed by her manner that she expected something more, but Buckwell was obdurate and taking her gently but firmly by the arm guided her to the partition and out through the sliding panel from which she had en-

tered. San Toy disappeared, down a dark stairway, as mysteriously as she came and the panel clicked behind her.

Buckwell unlocked the door and returned to the table with an ominous frown on his face. And he was just in time. Hardly had he been seated when a servant announced that the delegation was waiting to see him. With a wave of the hand he indicated that they were to be brought before him.

Six Chinamen entered, followed by several ward bosses. Buckwell nodded and waved them to the vacant chairs around the table. The bosses sat down entirely at ease and as one man proceeded to light cigars. Tilting back their chairs they waited for whatever was to happen.

The Chinamen either did not see Buckwell's invitation to be seated or else chose deliberately to ignore it. They came forward to the table, bowed deeply and arranging themselves before it stood motionless with right hands slipped into the sleeve of the other arm. Lu Fong their leader and spokesman was slightly in advance of the others.

Buckwell eyed them silently and with a countenance as imperturbable as their own.

Suddenly, reaching across the table he seized a strong paper cutter in his right hand and closing his fist on it snapped the steel in two and tossed the pieces into the fireplace.

The bosses stirred uneasily but Lu Fong and his friends did not seem to notice. If the exhibition was an object lesson to them it failed of its purpose. Buckwell sensed this immediately for throwing all pretense aside, he pointed his finger menacingly and said, "Lu Fong, this is the showdown. We warned you before to confine your business strictly to Chinatown. You haven't done it and now you'll sell your holdings at the figure I offer or we'll close you up tighter than a drum. And remember this—*from now on no Chink can own property outside of the Chinese district.*" He sank back in his chair to note the effect of his latest and most severe edict.

The situation was tense. No one said a word but every eye in the room was on the inscrutable features of Lu Fong. The tong leaders watched him anxiously as if trying to discover what it was all about, though willing to abide by whatever he said.

Lu Fong gazed at Buckwell silently. He was evidently weighing the situation care-

fully, fully recognizing the strength of those pitted against him. Then, as if there was nothing else to be done, he shrugged his shoulders slightly and smiled faintly. With true oriental grace he bowed low in acceptance of the inevitable and said, "Even though the Gods place the greater power in the hands of thy adversary, one must still bow to the will of the Gods."

"You're a wise Chink, Lu Fong," said Buckwell with a smile of satisfaction. "You know when you're licked. I'll meet you at the "Poodle Dog" tomorrow night at nine o'clock and we'll close the deal."

The conference was over. Once again Buckwell and his henchmen had triumphed.

Lu Fong nodded in agreement to the meeting and with the tong men at his heels shuffled from the room.

The bosses waited until they had disappeared and then gathered around Buckwell slapping him on the back with many jests of congratulation. Soon they departed with gruff chuckles and a wave of their hands. They too were satisfied. There would soon be more easy money for their tills.

Buckwell was alone only for a moment

when the servant again appeared and announced Brandon and his nephew Terrance O'Shaughnessy.

Brandon came forward with a frown on his face. His dismissal from the Vasquez rancho still rankled.

Buckwell greeted him with a smile, still thinking of his recent victory over the tong leaders.

"Well, Brandon, what success?"

Brandon replied a bit hesitatingly, "I saw Vasquez, Chris, but the old fool refused to sell at any price."

Terry came up to the table as he heard his uncle mention the name of Vasquez. His interest quickened as he realized the real purport of their visit to the old hacienda.

Buckwell's smile changed into a scowl as he stared at Brandon. He seldom failed in getting what he wanted and could not stand failure in anyone who worked for him. Brandon shifted uncomfortably as Buckwell said, "I want that land and I intend to get it. I would have paid Vasquez the price I told you but now I'll spend the money to prove that his grants are invalid."

Terry heard this with a worried expression. Dolores had become deeply entrenched

in his heart and he was anxious about her.

Buckwell continued, "Send him word that I have investigated his grants and found them valueless—and that he must prepare to vacate."

This was going a bit too far for Terry to remain apart from the conversation any longer and he stepped up to Buckwell saying, "But that hardly seems fair. The Vasquez family have lived on that old estate for generations."

Buckwell looked at Terry quickly as if noticing him for the first time. Brandon saw that Buckwell was offended and anxious to keep in his good graces intervened meaningly, "Terry is influenced by the fact that old Vasquez has a beautiful granddaughter."

He leered knowingly and Buckwell, catching the intent, nodded wisely and chuckled.

Terry caught both the leer and the nod and furious at the implication replied, "That remark was entirely uncalled for." Without another word to either of them he left the room.

Both men appeared surprised at Terry's sudden outburst but Buckwell looked thoughtful as he said, "Better watch the

boy, Brandon—he's a little too quick on the trigger." Brandon nodded, and his grim expression boded no good for his impetuous nephew. As he turned to leave Buckwell continued, "And remember—I want definite results on the Vasquez matter tomorrow—this time don't fail."

Brandon nodded ingratiatingly and left.

Buckwell followed to the door and locked it behind him. As he returned to the table his air of confidence was gone and in its place appeared a worried and haunted look. His head bowed and he glanced from side to side with a furtive air. Listening a moment, to be sure no one was approaching, he walked to the panel wall and pressing the secret button disappeared down the same dark stairway that only a few minutes before had been used by his fair visitor, San Toy.

CHAPTER V

BUCKWELL UNMASKED

Down the noiseless, carpeted stairway and along a narrow passage for a distance of perhaps fifty feet Buckwell made his way with a speed that indicated he was on familiar ground. He halted abruptly in the darkness. A heavy iron door barred his progress. Pressing a cunningly concealed button that seemed to be part of the hinge, the door slid away noiselessly and he entered a high ceilinged chamber handsomely furnished. It was lighted by the soft gleam of a single huge shaded lamp, beautifully inlaid. On the floor was a heavy oriental carpet, its golden richness lost in the deep shadows beyond the circle of light. Soft silken cushions were scattered about in inviting piles.

Buckwell closed the door and crossed to a heavy silk curtain that covered nearly all of one side of the room. Reaching behind the drapery he brought out an exquisitely

embroidered Chinese coat of elaborate design which he slipped on. He topped it off with a small, tight fitting skull cap of black silk.

Again reaching for the curtain he pulled it aside with an air of deep reverence and exposed to view a life sized figure of a Buddha resting on a shrine of jade and pearls. Over the shrine a light was burning and as he turned to face the silent figure Chris Buckwell stood revealed, as real a Mongolian as any of the tong leaders he had dismissed from his living room!

Gone were all the characteristics of the political Czar and the King of the Tenderloin and in their place, now that he was safe from the prying eyes of his henchmen, appeared the immobile slant eyed features of a Chinaman.

Bowing low before the image, he fell on his knees and rocking back and forth as if his very soul was in torment, prayed, "Oh, God of my Fathers, forgive me—forgive me that I have sinned against my people—that I have denied my blood and have persecuted those who are my brothers."

As Buckwell continued praying to the God of his ancestors, a peal of wild laughter

burst from a half lit corner of the room. It was weird and bloodcurdling. Buckwell shuddered.

The face of a hideous dwarf, barely discernible, peered through the iron bars of a cage-like affair that was built in one side of the wall. His lips were drawn back in a nasty snarl and as the gleaming eyes again encountered the kneeling figure before the shrine, his wild laughter reëchoed through the underground room.

Buckwell rose from his knees and shrank back in fear at the half-crazed face peering down upon him. The dwarf's gaunt arm, draped in tattered rags, came through the bars and his finger pointed at Buckwell accusingly.

"So," he said in a surprisingly well modulated voice, "There are more evil deeds upon your soul. Once more you come to seek forgiveness, not through penitence, but to dispel the black fear from your cowardly heart."

Again the laugh rang out and the finger still pointed in derision. It was done with deliberate intent to infuriate Buckwell, the poor dwarf's only means of retaliation.

It was more than Buckwell could stand. With a glare of fury he seized the extended arm and whipping out a cleverly concealed knife from his waist line poised it threateningly.

The dwarf did not flinch, "Kill me! Kill me *my brother,* I beg!" he said tauntingly, looking Buckwell full in the eyes. "To go to the arms of my ancestors would be infinitely more sweet than to endure this prison you have made for me."

They gazed at each other fixedly, hatred in the eyes of one, contempt in those of the other. It was unbelievable that two men so different in appearance could be blood brothers. At some time in the past they had both had exceptional opportunities for study. Their minds had been carefully trained but not for the sort of things that either was doing. Buckwell dropped his brother's arm as suddenly as he had seized it and turned back to the shrine with bowed head.

"So, you fear to put an end to the tortures of this decaying body of mine," continued the dwarf in a mocking tone, "You, the dauntless bird of prey are afraid! Afraid! Yet *I* fear nothing."

Buckwell remained standing with bowed head. He did not speak.

The aggravating voice came again, "You the vulture—I the pitiful worm. But remember the words of Confucius, my brother, 'Falling hurts least those who fly low.' "

For years Buckwell had kept this queer creature a prisoner. It was a necessary precaution to prevent his nationality from being revealed. Although dwarfed in body the ill-fated brother had a keen mind and would have exposed Buckwell as a betrayer of his race.

The derisive laughter of the imprisoned dwarf continued to ring in Buckwell's ears, like the inevitable tolling of death, as he threw himself on his knees before the shrine and resumed his praying.

CHAPTER VI

A WARNING

When one has been reared in a convent-like atmosphere of Old World traditions, things of ordinary significance sometimes seem of great importance. This was true with Dolores. She knew why her Grandfather was so perturbed and it upset her considerably because she could think of no way to relieve his mind from worry. She agreed that it would be disgraceful and heartbreaking to lose the Rancho, but that was the only consolation she could offer. She could think of nothing to *do* that would change the situation.

Sitting beside the fountain idly picking out a melody on her guitar she forgot about their estate difficulty and began daydreaming of Terry.

Suddenly she recalled the old myth of the wishing well and breaking a blossom from a nearby rose bush tossed it over her shoulder into the fountain saying, "I wish, I wish

Terry would come and help us!" Her long lashes pressed close against softly tinted cheeks as she closed her eyes tightly in an effort to wish hard and *make* the desire come true.

The dull thump of something falling in her lap made Dolores' eyes fly open in surprise. A rose, the very rose she had tossed into the wishing well was caught in the strings of her guitar! Before she could turn around to see where it had come from another rose fell beside it! Jumping up quickly she looked around and found—Terry, with a third rose in his upraised hand.

They both burst into merry laughter and Terry lost no time in presenting the remaining flower with due formality.

"Thank you," smiled Dolores shyly, pinning it in her hair with Spanish artistry.

"I would like to bring you an arm full of American Beauties, their color is like your cheeks." Terry's admiration was making him surprisingly complimentary.

"It is strange that you came out here. I was wishing you would," confessed Dolores with winning frankness.

"You were? That's great, but why? Is

anything wrong?" Terry suddenly remembered what had brought him to the rancho and his light-hearted banter gave way to anxiousness.

"Grandfather is ill with worry about the ranch being taken away from him. We don't know what to do." Her great eyes were opened wide in perplexity.

Dolores did not have any hesitancy about confiding private troubles to Terry; by some miracle it seemed to make her feel better.

"That's a funny thing," exclaimed Terry, "I came out to try to help you because I was afraid your grandfather did not understand how grave the land grant situation is."

"Yes, I think he does, but he is unwilling to take advice from outsiders."

"I'm not an outsider," quickly objected Terry and Dolores just as quickly agreed. Neither of them realizing how much they were taking for granted in so short a time, nor how strange their sympathetic loyalty would have sounded had anyone been there to hear.

"I am afraid Grandfather would not listen to—you won't be hurt at what I say? Sure?" as Terry shook his head, "Well, to a relative of Señor Brandon's."

Startled at her own effrontery Dolores clutched her throat in a futile effort to suppress the thing she had just said.

"Never mind," consoled Terry dolefully. Then he regarded Dolores silently for what seemed to be a long time before adding, "At least I will try and talk with him anyhow; and in case I fail I hope you will let me know if you need me." Taking out a card he offered it to her.

"Thank you, Terry," she said gratefully, "I will," and she clutched the card without looking at it.

"That's a promise," Terry smiled and held out his hand.

When Dolores' delicate fingers touched his palm he forgot about all promises but one, and that was the sacred vows that he hoped to make some day, with her.

They were rudely recalled from their enjoyment of each other when Vasquez stalked out into the patio, coldly furious at seeing them together. Dolores pulled her hand from Terry's warm clasp and drew back anxiously, afraid of the impending outburst.

"Good afternoon, Sir," greeted Terry, meeting the old man's eyes coolly.

"The same to you, señor, and may I, as

the head of the house, inquire your business here?"

"To warn and help you, Sir." Terry's eyes did not waver.

"Why should you infer that I require your help?" inquired Vasquez in stiff indignation.

"Please, Grandfather," quickly interposed Dolores, "allow him to speak!"

The old man looked from Terry to the beloved Granddaughter, whose hand rested on his shoulder in alarm. He had never been able to refuse anything that this only child of his only son asked of him.

"Very well," he acquiesced, bowing stiffly. "Come into the living room, señor, and be comfortable."

Dolores stood alone, watching them disappear within the familiar shadows of the rancho. Terry's card was still clutched convulsively in her hand. As if fearful of being left alone, she hurried after the men but stopped to gather a bouquet from a large clump of flowers. She was near enough to watch without eavesdropping. The additional explanation for Dolores' interest lay in the fact that she did not want Terry to depart without her knowing it.

True to habit and custom Vasquez insisted upon a round of wine before discussing the subject that was uppermost in their minds.

Unable to delay any longer, Terry leaned forward, saying, "Señor Vasquez, I know that unless you sell this ranch you will lose it just the same. Those fighting you are cruel and ruthless."

"Why do you think you know this?" Vasquez inquired stiffly.

"I heard it from the man's own lips—the man who intends seizing your property to increase his own power and wealth. He is paying whatever figure was offered you to have your original land grants declared invalid. And he can do it," finished Terry with conviction.

"I am willing to concede that you are acting in good faith, señor," said Vasquez sternly, "but I do not believe they could do such a thing. Why, my ancestors founded San Francisco and the Vasquez family has dwelt here in peace and happiness since 1776."

Terry sank back helplessly. The fire in Vasquez's eyes showed that he was inwardly raging at the bare thought of such an action.

A Warner Bros. Production.

A WILD PARTY IN THE GAY NINETIES.

Old San Francisco.

"When they fight, you will be powerless, Sir," Terry was doing his best.

"No! No!" Vasquez's voice rang out in protest and crossing to the mantel he took the famous old weapon from its case in the wall. "This sword," he explained proudly, showing it to Terry, "has protected this land and the Vasquez line since Spain's conquest in California—and it will not fail me now."

"Unfortunately," pursued Terry, "the politicians of San Francisco have no respect for tradition and a man's feelings. They are merciless when it comes to securing what they want and perhaps the greatest leader of them all is determined to add your rancho to his holdings because he knows that its value will increase as the city extends this way."

"My rancho is not for sale, no matter who wants to buy. I once killed a man, señor, because he stole a Vasquez horse and killed my brother—I will not hesitate to inflict a similar punishment on any man who dares trespass on my property rights." While Vasquez spoke he was reinspired with his youthful fire and courage—his spirit was magnificent! "Let us go out into the sunshine, señor, it will be more pleasant."

As they approached the doorway, Don Luis galloped up on his horse and waved gayly to Dolores. Terry's heart skipped a beat when she raised her bouquet in answer to the salute. And his thoughts were in a tumult when he saw the man dismount and greet Dolores by pressing her finger tips to his lips. He could not hear Don Luis say, "Behold what I have brought you, my loved one!" but he saw a long jewel box presented to Dolores and could tell that the greeting was more intimate than he wanted any man but himself to enjoy.

"Ah, thank the Good Mother that I have lived to see this rejoiceful day," sighed Vasquez, smiling happily as he watched the little scene.

Terry looked at him quickly, his brows puckered in a boyish frown of interrogation.

"The last of a family as proud and as glorious as my own," continued Vasquez, waving his hand toward Don Luis, "The only one to whom I would trust the happiness of my child."

Terry groaned inwardly. He had dared dream such glorious plans for Dolores and himself, and all the time she was promised to the picturesque Spaniard!

"I thought—she—had never been away from the rancho." Terry could not understand it.

"That is true except as regards calling on friends. They were children together—their traditions are the same as ours. For the daughter of a Vasquez to marry other than a man of her own blood would be to court the bitterest of woe." Vasquez smiled gently. Not for a moment did he imagine how deeply his announcement had affected Terry.

Nor did he notice that the youth smiled bitterly at the thought of what a fool he had been. Terry wanted the wine back on the table that he had barely sipped. He wanted a quantity of it to drown his disappointment and make him forget about the secret Vasquez had just revealed.

"I am sorry you have failed to heed my warning, Señor Vasquez, I seem to have misunderstood things," and without further parley Terry picked up his hat and left by the entrance opposite the patio so he would not encounter Dolores. He felt like a silly ass for having believed that Dolores could have cared as he did.

Vasquez looked after him in surprise,

shrugged his shoulders, and settled down to polish the great sword and meditate upon the uncertainties of the future.

Out in the patio, Dolores was still curiously examining the pretty jewel case. "What is it?" she asked, looking up at Don Luis inquisitively.

"Open it and see!" he advised smilingly.

"No, not unless you tell me first—I don't like frogs, or bumblebees or worms and that is what you always 'surprise' me with. What is it?" she held the box ready to toss away, "or I will throw it into the pool?"

"Not this time, sweet Señorita, I won't fool you any more. You have grown up into a real lady and this is a present to celebrate the event."

Thus reassured Dolores ventured to untie the small knot, but first she stealthily slipped Terry's card into the low cut neck of her gown. Still a bit doubtful of Don Luis' assurance that nothing would jump at her she held the box at arm's length and pressed the spring. He laughed delightedly. The lid flew open revealing a long hat pin, the head made from a real rosebud that had been metalized.

"It is lovely," admired Dolores, "but if

you had only thought, I have as much use for it as for the fat green caterpillar you brought me last time." They had known each other so long that Dolores always treated him with the outspoken frankness that she would have given a brother.

"No, no," objected Don Luis, "all the ladies are wearing them in San Francisco—they are the style!" He was very observing when it came to feminine apparel also, more thoroughly informed on the subject than he cared to have Dolores ever know.

"They are the style for ladies who wear hats, perhaps, but how am I to wear it in my parasol or mantilla?" Her eyes questioned him provokingly.

Don Luis adored women but did not like to have them make fun of him or enjoy a joke at his expense.

"Then we will let the flower grow in the rose garden," and taking the pin from Dolores he stuck it up in the earth. The small metal head nodded stiffly beside the natural blossoms that waved above it.

"And I shall water it every day! Thank you so much!" she said in mock appreciation, her eyes twinkling merrily.

"You love a joke, don't you! Well, there

is something else in the bottom of the box that I am sure you will appreciate."

Daintily lifting up a corner of the cotton Dolores saw what appeared to be a silver tube. Taking it out she examined it with a puzzled pucker between her beautiful eyes.

"What is one to do with a queer piece of silver like that?" she asked, holding it toward Don Luis.

"It shall be my pleasure to show you," deftly he pulled off the small top and exposed a crimson tube of lip rouge. It was Dolores's first introduction to an artificial beauty aid and her bewilderment amused Don Luis.

"For your lips?" she inquired, her feminine instinct telling her what it was for without being informed.

"No, my sweet, not mine—yours!" and without warning Don Luis placed the palm of his hand on the soft curl of luxuriant hair and drawing her toward him applied the rouge to her lips.

Furiously indignant Dolores pushed his hands away and stood facing him defiantly.

"It is an insult to infer that I would use such a thing and you have no right to put it on my lips!" with the back of her hand she

tried to wipe the moist scar away and it only inflamed her anger to have Don Luis throw back his head and laugh.

He was thinking of the night before and of how differently another woman had acted when he painted her lips. It was that incident that made him think of buying a similar toy for Dolores. Had she only been able to divine his thoughts her anger would have known no bounds; for although only a girl Dolores had very decided ideas about what was right and proper and she would not have approved of the worldliness in which Don Luis reveled. Haughtily turning away she left him and went into the living room, pausing just long enough before a mirror to make sure that none of the hateful stuff was left on her lips.

Dolores was surprised to find her Grandfather alone. "Where is Señor O'Shaughnessy?" she inquired eagerly, pronouncing the long name with difficulty.

"Gone back," replied Vasquez, shrugging his shoulders and pointing down the main road in front of the Rancho.

"Why?" Dolores felt like crying.

"Because I did not tremble at the rash warning which his youthful imagination

probably exaggerated." Vasquez believed this to be the real reason for Terry's sudden departure. "It does not matter!"

But to Dolores it mattered very much. She could not understand why Terry left before seeing her. With drooping shoulders she curled up on a wide window seat and dolefully looked off toward Old San Francisco. Perhaps she would never see Terry again! Taking out his card she read:

"Terrance O'Shaughnessy
The Bachelor's Club
San Francisco"

Dolores found herself wondering just where the Bachelor's Club was and how Terry spent his time—did he know a number of girls and was he as nice to any of them as he had been to her?

Looking up from the card, Dolores sighed, then she gave a little start, frowned, and deliberately turning her back to the room continued looking out the window.

Don Luis, smiling indolently, had just entered and blown her a kiss from his finger tips. When Dolores turned her back he laughed softly and quickly crossing to the

window seat lounged comfortably at the opposite end.

"Am I forgiven?" and leaning forward he grasped her high heeled slipper to attract her attention.

"Yes," conceded Dolores, "if you will let go of my slipper—please!"

"All right, sweet lady—now I am going to play a love song for you." And closing his eyes he leaned back against the window and began playing a guitar that he had brought in from the patio.

Rising very quietly Dolores stealthily slipped away and followed her Grandfather outside where she had just seen him receive a message from a stranger.

His shoulders sagged. The spark of his old fighting spirit was gone. He was silent and dejected with an open letter in his hand.

"Grandfather dear, what is wrong?" she asked gently, putting her arms around his drooping shoulders.

The old man tried in vain to arouse from his depression. "The young señor was right," he explained bitterly, "they have served notice that our grant is invalid and we must vacate immediately." His lips twitched and his eyes were moist.

"Oh, no!" Dolores stood aghast.

"Yes, it is—true." For the first time the fine old white head was bowed in grief.

Dolores stroked his hands in sympathy.

"But he will help us—the young Señor—he has promised."

"No, my child, we cannot depend upon him, he is one of their breed, and blood will tell." Vasquez crumpled the heartbreaking message in his hand.

Don Luis opened his eyes on the final note of the love song and looked up for Dolores's applause. To his surprise he was alone. "Caramba!" he exclaimed in disgust and, slamming down the guitar marched grouchily out to the patio.

"Ah, my boy," called old Vasquez trembingly, "we have had bad news; could you take a message to town for me?"

"I am sorry, but er—unfortunately I have an engagement that makes me ride in the opposite direction." Don Luis tried to show a regret that he did not feel. It was his nature to be happy—when he could do what pleased him, and other people's sorrows or the rôle of messenger boy had no place in his schedule of a well spent day.

Dolores's cheeks crimsoned at Don Luis'

reply and she only nodded stiffly when he bade her "adios." As soon as he was out of sight she turned impulsively to her Grandfather.

"You see—*his* blood has told a cowardly tale! The young señor will help us—I know he will!"

But the old man was just about completely broken in spirit and body. He barely remembered having asked Don Luis to do him a favor and had no recollection at all of his answer.

Dolores summoned the servant and with difficulty they assisted Vasquez inside and made him comfortable for the night.

"Don't worry to-night, dear," encouraged Dolores, soothing his tired forehead. "Let us see what the morrow brings."

He smiled up contentedly and his restless fingers seemed to find peace in her firm young hand. She kissed him gently.

"Go to sleep, Grandfather dear—go to sleep—go to sleep," she crooned and stroked his head with her free hand until his relaxed condition told her that he was asleep.

Tiptoeing from the room Dolores stood alone in the familiar hallway and leaning against the wall let her tears stream down

her cheeks. They were going to be put out of the Rancho! The old surroundings were very dear to her but they meant infinitely more to her Grandfather and she felt he would not be able to stand the ordeal of a compulsory departure. And even if he could weather the strain where would they go? Dolores knew that something must be done before the morrow and she was the only one to try and find a way out of the trouble.

In the midst of her great need and dilemma she thought of Terry and determined to go to him, that very night while her Grandfather slept, in blissful ignorance of her plans.

CHAPTER VII

THE POODLE DOG

"May the Saints preserve me for a blatherin' fool!" fumed Terry on his way back to Frisco after that thankless trip of warning to Vasquez.

When a man plans to celebrate his disillusion in a woman there is usually nothing lacking. This was true with Terry. He had been so sure of seeing love in Dolores's eyes —love for him—that it was a shock to discover her betrothal to another man. If she could be so perfidious there was no use in remaining decent for any woman, he reasoned. They were probably all flirts or worse, and he would celebrate the discovery by learning a few tricks from some of them who were credited with being skilled in their trade.

All the way back to his Club he took malicious delight in mapping out an elaborate celebration for the evening. After arranging the personnel of his party he decided

they would start out at The Poodle Dog and hit every place, both famous and infamous, along the Cocktail Route before morning.

By eight o'clock he was in evening clothes and his white bow tie had been pulled into such a hard knot that it would have to be cut off before he could retire with any comfort. In short, Terry was mad and had a grudge against everyone and everything.

An open cab landed him on a certain street at number 620 and the mistress of the establishment agreeably provided three young women to help Terry celebrate. He was relieved to find them as unlike Dolores, the cause of his spree, as is possible for women to be. Boisterously piling into his waiting carriage they proceeded to make merry with an exuberance of gayety that indicated a round or so of drinks before leaving the house.

Terry had reserved a large room on the second floor of The Poodle Dog and when they drove up to the courtyard entrance he was informed that some of his other guests had arrived. With considerable hilarity on the part of the girls, they passed noisily through the hall, past the big open doorway leading into the enormous barroom, and

on up the heavily carpeted stairs to room number 10, at the head. Their entrance was greeted with shouts of welcome from several of Terry's men friends and the girls they had brought along.

It was the kind of a party where introductions are waived. Everyone immediately proceeded to become more intimately acquainted. A tub full of iced champagne bottles had already begun to pop. The evening was well under way.

"How does it come about that we get a chance to enjoy a swell splurge like this?" one of the girls inquired loudly.

"It's Terry's party—make him tell you," advised someone else.

"Going to get married, Terry?" taunted another, "and want a last grand look around first?"

"No! I'm *not* going to get married—that's it—I thought I was but I'm not—I was in love with a Spanish Princess but she preferred a man from her own country."

A volley of condolences came his way but Terry could not be cheered.

After an hour everyone appeared to be in high spirits except the gloomy host. His anticipation had been too great. He was

there but not a part of the fun. An empty champagne glass, held tightly, indicated there was only one thing that interested him.

Beckoning a waiter he had it refilled and as quickly drained it—down to the last drop in the long hollow stem. A slight exhilaration recalled the duties of a host and crossing to the big, elaborately spread table he waved his arms about while giving rather stuttering orders to "Serve some'sin—soon!"

From a tray of cocktails that had previously been the rounds he picked up two untouched glasses and gulped down the contents.

One of the girls went to the piano at the opposite end of the room and played a lively tune that lured others to the floor for dancing, but Terry turned his back on them and facing the wall sank into a despondent attitude. "And I really loved her!" he mourned to himself.

One friend who knew him for what he really was, came over. "Cheer up, Terry," he said, slapping him on the knee. "what's one Spanish princess more or less in a live town like this?"

"Let up—will you?" Terry shook his head and turned away.

The friend's laugh attracted a girl standing nearby and she stepped forward to sit on Terry's lap. "Listen, Kid, forget that foreigner. You got us, haven't you?" she put both arms around his neck and tried to nestle her head on his shoulder.

"None of that," retorted Terry with a scowl and roughly shoved her hands away. "I'm paying for this party . . . isn't that enough?"

"Well, of all the conceit!" the girl exclaimed with a shrug. "Never mind, Kid, you can't affect me—I'm indifferent!" and sliding off his lap she flounced across the floor and joined a livelier group. "Say," she greeted them, "the Kid's in the dumps, maybe a few tears would wash the grouch out of his system—gimme a try at that keyboard," and sitting down to the piano she broke into a sentimental ballad.

That was in the day when waiters were very agreeable and the white vested quartet that was preparing the table acquiesced when one of the guests asked them for a little close harmony. Putting their heads together they raised their voices high with

"Only A Bird In A Gilded Cage . . . a beautiful sight to see, etc."

Shouts of laughter greeted the effort and everyone except Terry joined in the familiar song. They gathered around and did their best to bring him out of his blue funk.

"Snap out of it, Terry—or you'll kill the party." "Try a Bunny Hug," called the girl at the piano, and she began playing a snappy dance tune.

Terry had reached the point where he was ashamed to continue indulging in his own gloom. To everyone's relief he grabbed a girl and started the two-step. At last the damper was lifted and the party began to flame in earnest.

While Terry's celebration was in hilarious progress behind closed doors in the private section upstairs, out on the street The Poodle Dog sign blinked, and its gleaming lights attracted a myriad of people to the variegated interior. Its reputation was world wide and its flickering electric sign told all who came near that they had finally arrived.

The busy bar with its long line of bartenders was the meeting place of hundreds of convivial people. The political ring of

San Francisco used it as a regular hangout and many a shady deal was concocted in the booths that lined the room opposite the bar.

Joy seekers came often, for The Poodle Dog cocktails were potent as well as particularly palatable. In short, its broad mahogany counter dispensed liquid sunshine at a speed and regularity that fairly poured the gold and silver into the ever-waiting cash drawer.

For Chris Buckwell to pick The Poodle Dog as the place for closing the deal with Lu Fong was more from force of habit than anything else. He was its biggest and steadiest patron. Just the mere fact of his being there meant that scores of his friends and satellites were also present. They welcomed an opportunity to bask in the spotlight of his notoriety and pick up the crumbs of any political deal that might transpire. And so it happened that when Buckwell, accompanied by Brandon, pushed open the swinging door of The Poodle Dog they were greeted on all sides by men who knew that Buckwell's power in the underworld and in the city's politics could either make them or break them.

The newcomers readily found a vacant

place before the bar and ordered their drinks. Brandon took an old-fashioned cocktail and Buckwell took his whiskey straight with the remark, "I prefer my liquor straight and—my women—not so straight."

Brandon approved with a smile.

While waiting for the bartender to serve them, the sudden cessation of general conversation caused them to turn inquiringly. They saw one of Old San Francisco's famous Barbary Coast characters stride into the barroom.

It was Old Testament Charley. He was familiarly referred to by this cognomen because he was once a preacher, but the vice that was rampant in San Francisco following the gold rush had been too much for his tired, overworked brain and it gave out under the strain. His delusion was that he ruled as Emperor of San Francisco and the habitués of the Barbary Coast were his particularly misbehaved subjects.

Old Testament Charley was tall and thin with the face of a dreamer, rather than that of a madman. In spite of his continued efforts to reform the world, and San Francisco in particular, he was tolerated the length and breadth of the Cocktail Route for

the harmless, kindly and—to many in the saloons—amusing soul that he really was.

Charley's was not the only brilliant mind that had been deranged in an effort to quell the deplorable conditions that existed in Frisco, especially from 1900 to 1906. Many good men lost fortunes, health and reason by repeated attempts to reform the city and some of its unprincipled inhabitants.

Old Testament Charley frowned with the displeasure of a Monarch as he surveyed the long line of gay patrons before the bar.

Some of them noticed his displeasure and paused long enough to raise their liquor glasses in salute and bow low in mock obeisance.

"It pains me, my good subjects," he commented seriously, "to see you so heedless of my royal edict. You know that I have condemned just such frivolous behavior as this—"

A general laugh interrupted his tirade. Charley was tolerated but not heeded by patrons of the bar.

"Here's how, Emperor!" called Buckwell with a cynical smile, and he deliberately drained his whiskey with a quick toss.

Other men followed Buckwell's example

and the old man's eyes blazed at the gross insult to his dignity and command.

"And you—" he fairly shouted, pointing at Buckwell with trembling fingers, "You are the backbone of the tenderloin—the backbone of this Mile of Hell."

There was a pause. Voices were hushed and smiles vanished. Everyone looked at Buckwell to see how he would take the direct accusation in public.

His cynical smile did not change, his composure was not ruffled. Buckwell was a man of superb control. It would take more than a fanatic's verbal attack to make him lose his temper.

"But," continued Charley emphatically, "you are destined to perish and decay, and this underworld of which thou art kind—it too shall perish with thee. Mark well my words!" He spoke with the fervor of a seer and his long arm was extended prophetically at Buckwell.

"Bravo! Bravo!" said Buckwell, applauding the speech, then reaching in a vest pocket he took out a coin. "Here you are, my good man," he offered with tolerant charity and tossed the money in Charley's direction.

The crowd laughed.

Buckwell enjoyed the limelight and while eyes were centered on him ordered a round of drinks for everyone.

Old Testament Charley deftly caught the gold piece, looked at it a minute, then at Buckwell and spreading his arms, wide, as if to include the whole room, raised his eyes and prayed, "Forgive them my Father, for they know not what they do." He then pocketed the coin and stalked away with great dignity.

"Here's how!" toasted Buckwell, his glass of whiskey upraised to attract the attention of people nearby.

Two small doors swung back and forth on their hinges. Charley had strode from the room while the men were drinking.

"To you!" returned several men, in unison.

Inasmuch as Buckwell had bought the drinks it was a natural return of toasts, but he did not think of it in that way. He was greatly pleased with himself. He loved the spotlight of notoriety and the fawning advances of those gathered about him, but more than all that he loved the feeling of power and superiority that the incident with Charley gave him.

As Buckwell put his empty glass back on the bar he motioned the bartender.

"Yes, boss?" inquired the man in shirt sleeves, bending across the gleaming mahogany surface.

"George, find out if Lu Fong and the other damn Chinks have come!" said Buckwell in a low voice.

The question was relayed to someone else and eventually the Bartender got the news Buckwell wanted.

"Room 12—upstairs!" he announced briefly, catching Buckwell's eye across the bar, and nonchalantly raised a whiskey bottle, that he happened to have in his hand, to indicate that the tong leaders were in a private room above.

Buckwell understood the gesture and the meaning and taking Brandon by the arm left the barroom.

He was going to have Lu Fong deed to him all Chinese holdings outside of Chinatown. The issue at hand was the last property that Lu Fong purchased and he was being compelled to transfer the title at Buckwell's figure.

As a political boss Buckwell was going to see that his edict about the Chinamen *not*

owning property outside of their own section was enforced. That is by every Chinaman except himself. He had no fear that his racial secret would ever be discovered.

If the Tong leaders had only known that the political white Czar who persecuted them and profited by their deals was in reality a Mongolian, a traitor to his and their own race they would have held him in their ruthless power and eventually delighted in putting him to death by slow torture.

CHAPTER VIII

DOLORES GOES TO FRISCO

Dolores was forced to take the old Rancho servant into her confidence about going to see Terry. It was her first trip to San Francisco, and being at night, she could not go alone. There was no one else to whom she could appeal.

He implored her to reconsider. The kindly soul even shed a few tears in his concern over her safety, but Dolores was determined she was doing the only thing that would help them out of their difficulty. She could not be swerved.

"As soon as all the sky is dark, I want you to have the carriage ready in the stable yard and I will come out there so that Grandfather will not hear the wheels go past his window. You will drive," she explained, "and we will leave by the short back route that Don Luis always takes on his horse."

It was the most amazing and difficult order the lone servant of the rancho had ever

been given. He knew it was not right for Dolores to go, but he also knew that it was better for him to accompany her inasmuch as she had made up her mind.

A busy few hours followed. The ancient carriage had to be dusted and brushed and the harness rubbed up. The peon was also sufficiently impressed with the importance of the occasion to devote a little attention to his own meager apparel.

But his preparations were nothing compared to Dolores's feverish activity. First of all she made sure that her Grandfather was comfortable and that all the usual night things were at hand in case he awakened while the rancho was deserted. He seldom called after his door was closed at bedtime and Dolores knew her absence would not be discovered unless he had another attack, and that was not likely while he was quietly sleeping.

Her next problem was what to wear. Worry did not prevent her from wanting to look her very best for this first trip to San Francisco when Terry would see her in his own surroundings.

Her selection of a gown was worthy of a woman of broader experience. She looked

lovely and best of all had no conception of her incomparable beauty. Peering from her windows, for about the twelfth time, Dolores was relieved to find that at last it was dark. Hurrying down creaking stairs she silently left the unlighted hacienda, like an exquisite butterfly leaving its empty shell. With dainty flounces lifted high she ran lightly to the stable yard and found everything in readiness.

The drive to the Bachelors' Club seemed endless and when they finally stopped before the dignified entrance Dolores breathed a deep sigh of relief and excitement. She felt strange, hedged in by buildings on all sides, and the people passing by appeared hurried and wide awake—for nighttime it seemed very queer to the young Spanish girl, fresh from her secluded life at the Rancho.

Without hesitancy she alighted from the carriage and entering the building with unconscious assurance was highly indignant to have the door man accost her with:

"Pardon me, Madam, but this is the Bachelors' Club."

"Yes, I know," replied Dolores in surprise, advancing in spite of his protest. "That is why I am here." She was not

pleased with this ungracious reception. "I want to see Mr. O'Shaughnessy."

"There must be some mistake, Madam, ladies are not permitted in the Club."

"Why, he gave me—" Dolores stopped. She felt like crying. "But I *must* see him," she finished in desperation.

"Just step out on the street, Madam, and I will send word that you want him—who shall I say?"

"Miss Dolores Vasquez," her head went up proudly, and with tears filled eyes she returned to the carriage.

It was wretchedly humiliating to be turned out of Terry's Club and Dolores did not approve the custom. However, she consoled herself with the fact that Terry would soon be out and they could discuss the matter in the carriage. She watched the entrance eagerly and her heart sank when the door man reappeared and coming to the curbing said:

"Mr. O'Shaughnessy is out to-night, Madam, he left word that in case of any messages he was dining at The Poodle Dog."

"Oh, dear!" she exclaimed, "I must see him—won't you please tell my driver how to get there?"

Her appeal was so full of honest distress that the door man readily complied.

Dolores hoped Terry would not be dining with his Uncle—it would be impossible to talk freely in his presence, but on second thought she imagined it more likely that he would be alone, at a secluded table, thinking about her. At least that is the way she pictured him and in her innocence imagined joining him for a cup of coffee and coming away with his assurance that the Rancho would remain in their possession. But she was soon to learn that things did not happen like that in real life.

When her carriage drew up beneath the flickering electric sign she remembered her experience at the Club and hesitated.

"Go in, please," she instructed her servant, "and see if Mr. O'Shaughnessy is here."

In a moment he was back, opening the carriage door. "They said for you to go upstairs—the young señor is in room 10."

Timidly approaching the entrance Dolores entered The Poodle Dog and glanced about shyly. To use her own words, "It seemed unholy."

Of all the visitors at The Poodle Dog that

night Dolores was probably the most out of place and the least appreciative of its attractions.

For a moment she chanced to be alone in the entrance hall and, glimpsing the large doorway leading into the open barroom, peered in. With a gasp of shocked amazement she shrank back against the wall. It was impossible to believe that Terry was in a place like that. Confident that she had wandered through a wrong entrance, Dolores was leaving when an employee stopped her.

"Forgotten your room number?" he inquired.

It was apparent that she belonged in one of the private dining rooms on the floor above.

"Why—er—no," stammered Dolores and suddenly changed her mind about going. "Where is room 10, please?"

"Lookin' for Mr. O'Shaughnessy's party?"

Dolores nodded in relief, although she did not like the implication of the word party.

"I'm waiting on his table," explained the waiter. "Just go right on up these stairs and open the first door to your left."

"Thank you," and relieved of all misgivings she followed his directions.

The waiter looked after her with a wise smirk of approval.

Reaching room 10 Dolores started to open the door, then released the knob and knocked instead. She knocked until her hand hurt, but could not summon sufficient courage to open a strange door unbidden.

The walls of The Poodle Dog were made to keep in all sounds so she did not hear the music, singing and general boisterousness within. But one of the men guests who was less intoxicated than anyone present happened to be leaving and opened the door as if in response to her knock.

"I am looking for Terry," she explained, not conscious of having used his given name.

"You belong to this party—and are just getting here?" exclaimed the youth in open admiration. "I thought something was lacking and now I know what it was—you! Come on in!"

To Dolores's amazement he put his arm around her waist and tried to draw her into the room. Breathless with fury she pushed him aside.

The party was exposed to her view. She

A Warner Bros. Production. *Old San Francisco.*

DOLORES SEEKS TERRENCE AT THE POODLE DOG—NOTORIOUS CABARET.

recoiled and stood in breathless horror, looking into the room. How different from what she had anticipated!

Dinner was over, although some of the men and girls were still lounging around the table in familiar intoxication. The dancing was fast and furious or so slow that the dreamy couples got in everyone else's way. Dolores felt that she was peering into another world—a place peopled by creatures with whom she did not care to mingle. In the midst of the hideous revelation she saw Terry—her handsome, clean, clear-eyed Terry—he had a girl in his arms and was dancing the "Grizzly Bear" with stumbling feet. Dolores did not know it by name but to her sweet mind it was the most hideous spectacle she ever saw.

As each couple caught sight of Dolores they stopped whatever they were doing and looked at her through bleary eyes and whirling brains. She resembled a picture of some beautiful, frightened girl in a story book and they wondered what she was doing there. Terry had stopped dancing and was holding his silk hat high above his head for a girl to kick at when he, too, caught sight of Dolores in the doorway. Tossing the hat

aside he staggered forward, scarcely crediting his vision. The discarded partner, drunkenly jealous of a new flame, tried to pull him back, but lurching forward, Terry unsteadily approached Dolores and made a pitiful attempt to smile.

Hurt surprise changed to contempt when she realized his condition.

"What choo doin' eer?" Terry managed to get out.

Dolores did not turn away but she closed her eyes to blot out the repulsive sight before her. His hair was mussed and moist, his eyes were bloodshot, his face looked swollen and white, and his collar was crumpled over in a soiled wilt.

"I thought I could depend upon you," Dolores drew herself up to her full height and spoke with a bitterness beyond her years. "But Grandfather was right—blood will tell."

Terry was too dazed to take in what she said, but he had sobered enough to be ashamed. "I'm sorry—I—I apologize!" came forth brokenly, as if that was sufficient.

Dolores shook her head and stared from Terry to the girls and men who had gathered around the doorway. Then she turned

and proudly swept out of the room and down the stairs without saying another word.

No girl ever had a more disillusioning first trip to a city she had dreamed about for years.

From an all concealing nook in the hallway Chris Buckwell had been an interested and accidental spectator from the time he came out of an adjoining private room when Dolores knocked on the door. He had no idea who she was but her exceptional beauty and youthful innocence warned that she was worth watching while in The Poodle Dog alone.

Her handling of the situation brought forth Buckwell's admiration. His eyes glistened and he smiled shrewdly at Terry's predicament. As soon as Dolores started downstairs Buckwell sauntered from his shadow and nonchalantly followed. He wanted to know who she was and where she was going, but would not condescend to ask Terry.

Buckwell reached the entrance door just as Dolores stepped into her carriage and the glaring lights of the café afforded a splendid chance for him to again sense her utter loveliness as well as to see the Vasquez crest

and name on the carriage door. With a low whistle of surprise he turned back into the hall, a frown on his usually inscrutable brow. Hearing a commotion at the head of the stairs he looked up and saw Terry struggling to break away from the frantic grasp of a girl. "Don't be a fool," he heard her shout. "Can't you see she didn't appreciate you—stay with us!"

Terry did not pay any attention to her. He wanted to talk with Dolores again before she got away. Pulling his arm loose he lost his balance, lurched forward and fell headlong downstairs, rolling and slipping, over and over until he hit the floor below.

Buckwell jumped aside in time to help him recover a footing. Fortunately Terry was only badly bruised and very much sobered up.

"Well, if that is old Vasquez's granddaughter," consoled Buckwell with a mocking smile, "I don't blame you for your haste."

"Go to the devil, will you!" flared Terry, and staggering to the open door found that Dolores had disappeared.

Utterly despondent and disgusted he tottered into the barroom and gulped down a drink of straight whiskey.

He could not think what had brought Dolores to The Poodle Dog. "Engaged to one man, flirted with me and visiting this place alone at night—and she said she had never been to Frisco! What kind of a girl is she?" Terry gave it up but he could not drive her from his thoughts even with an excess of liquor.

Out in the hall Buckwell watched with the same leering satisfied smile. Although his eyes were on Terry, his thoughts—like Terry's—were of Dolores. Good white women had never had any appeal for Buckwell. He preferred—well, the others. After seeing Dolores his desires were changed; he wanted her. And to use a well known expression of the time, "When Chris Buckwell wanted anything—he got it." Not five minutes later Buckwell had instructed his man to drop the Vasquez ranch matter—he was going to give it his personal attention.

Dolores rode on back to the Rancho and was thankful there was no one to witness her tears. She had never imagined it possible for anyone to be so miserable. Had she only known what the future held her suffering would have paled to insignificance beside the appalling tragedies that were destined to befall her during the next few days.

CHAPTER IX

BUCKWELL SETS HIS TRAP

THE MOMENTARY glimpse of Dolores that Buckwell had enjoyed during her ill-advised visit to the Poodle Dog in search of Terry had aroused the Czar of the Tenderloin as nothing else had done in years. Women were not new to him, neither did they offer any pleasure to his jaded appetite. But with Dolores it was different. Her fresh beauty, her youth, her innocence appealed to him as sparkling water to a desert traveler—and as satisfying.

And so on the next afternoon it was two objects: the thought of a grafting profit—through attainment of the property, by purchase or otherwise—and a keen desire to meet Dolores, the lovely and spirited belle of the hacienda; that brought him, immaculately dressed as usual, to the gates of the old Vasquez estate.

As he sauntered towards the ruins of the old mission his eyes lighted with satisfaction

as they beheld the rolling hills and broad acres on either side. This valuable property would soon be his; other speculators wanted it but he would be the lucky one. Over the chapel door, moss covered and half obliterated, his roving eye caught the Vasquez crest and motto "A Vasquez avenges a Vasquez," and his lips curled contemptuously at this symbol of useless sentiment and emotion.

Turning to go toward the house, he stopped abruptly. In the distance he noticed Dolores and her grandfather coming toward the mission. Vasquez wore a shawl and leaned heavily on his cane as Dolores helped him along. Buckwell's wily brain was seized with an idea. Hastily crunching the cigar he had been puffing so contently, beneath the heel of his boot, he slipped into the mission and waited for them to approach.

The old man walked slowly. The grief and trouble of the last two days had aged him considerably. The sight of his broad acres seemed to torture him by their association with the past. He shook his head sadly as he walked.

Dolores was silent and grave, too. The disillusionment and horrible memories of the previous night lay heavily on her mind.

She sighed in remembrance and thanked heaven that her Grandfather had no inkling of where she had been.

As Buckwell sensed them passing the mission door he hastily advanced to the altar and falling to his knees assumed an attitude of devout worship. Keenly alert to each sound of their footsteps he was fully aware that he had been discovered. Silently he awaited with bowed head as they drew near and stopped just behind him. Then rising, apparently from prayer, as if in ignorance of their presence, he started as he saw them watching him curiously.

"I trust you will pardon this intrusion," he said apologetically, bowing low, "but I could not resist a prayer in this ancient sanctuary. It seems so like a breath from the sacred past."

Vasquez nodded warmly at this appreciation of his beloved mission.

Smiling first at him and then at Dolores, Buckwell continued, "I hope, with your permission, I may come again and often," he paused, waiting for the effect of his words.

The old man's smile faded and was replaced with a look of deep sadness. He glanced fondly about before replying, "I

am afraid this may be your last visit—grafting politicians from the city threaten to seize our estate—and these old walls will be crushed under the merciless wheels of progress."

Buckwell stared from one to the other in amazement. His indignation was superb.

"Do you mean to say that they threaten to demolish this glorious monument to the very traditions that made our country what it is?" He paused and looked at Dolores as if to get her confirmation to her Grandfather's statement.

She nodded in agreement, her eyes shining in response to his words. "They threaten to declare invalid the old Spanish grant under which our ancestors held this land for more than one hundred years," she supplied with indignation.

Buckwell looked at her earnestly and sympathetically, then placing his hand gently on Vasquez's arm and said, "I, myself, am not without some influence in the city. If I can find out who is behind this outrage, I promise—for the sake of what this old mission represents—that I will save your estate."

The stranger's manner and words gave

them new courage and Dolores ventured to say, "You seem to have come in answer to a wish—I threw a rose into the wishing well this morning and wished that someone true and fine would be sent to help us."

She could not have said anything that would have given Buckwell a better indication of her simple trust. He was well pleased and planned to use her to further his nefarious scheme.

"No desire of yours should ever go ungratified," he complimented with just the right amount of mature and distant dignity. "I trust I may have the privilege of serving you often."

Dolores looked at her Grandfather and her eyes signalled "Isn't he nice!" He answered "Yes, my child, he is kind."

How cruel it was that they should have been so deluded and their faith so played with by the very man who was causing all the heartache and worry!

"We would appreciate anything you can do—I am at a loss as to what our next step should be," volunteered Vasquez, pitifully.

"In order to understand the situation," said Buckwell, assuming a more businesslike air, "I would like to examine your grant—

merely to see if it was properly filed after the American Occupation."

"Certainly Señor," acquiesced Vasquez, eager to do all in his power to assist, "come into the house and we can go into the matter thoroughly." With a sweeping gesture he indicated the way, but the strain of worry and excitement had drained his strength. Tottering uncertainly he almost fell.

"Oh, Grandfather!" cried Dolores, steadying him with one arm around his waist.

"I—am all right—now!" he gasped, but one hand fluttered at his heart and Dolores knew he was just being brave.

"Let's sit down," she suggested cheerfully.

"No, No!" the old man insisted, "I want to get this matter settled as soon as possible," and he continued along the path with dragging feet.

Dolores exchanged a worried look with Buckwell behind her Grandfather's back and they moved cautiously along on either side, ready to catch him if he needed assistance.

When they finally reached the living room Vasquez sank wearily into a great armed

chair and closed his eyes. "Dolores" he called unaware that she was kneeling by his side until she covered his nervous hands with hers. "Ah, yes, my child, bring the strong box in—you know where it is."

"Yes, Grandfather, dear," and she rose quickly to do his bidding.

In a moment she returned to the room carrying a handsomely carved box of Spanish design. Pausing before old Vasquez for instructions she found that he was asleep.

"I hate to waken him," she whispered across the intervening space to Buckwell, "he is so exhausted."

"Yet it may be disastrous to lose more time," supplied Buckwell craftily, in *sotto voce.*

"Couldn't you look at the papers without Grandfather?" asked Dolores, innocently, "I know how to open the box."

"Why—yes, I suppose I could," admitted Buckwell with apparent reluctance. But he had reached Dolores's side at the table before she opened the box and, as if he had devoted enough time to being polite he reached in and took out the grant papers.

"Aren't they perfectly legal?" inquired

Dolores, waiting anxiously for his opinion, as he hastily scanned each sheet.

Buckwell laughed, softly to keep from waking Vasquez. "I am not expert enough in such matters to tell, but I shall be very happy to have my lawyer go over them for you."

"It does not seem right to put you to so much trouble." Dolores had a habit of talking with her eyes as well as her lips and Buckwell found it diverting to watch her. It was a new rôle for him to play protector to a lovely damsel in distress and he enjoyed it to the utmost.

"No trouble at all; besides I could endure many troubles for the privilege of coming to the Chapel to worship, and perhaps to see you—and your Grandfather," he added hastily. "And, by the way, I am afraid he is in no condition to go to the city now." Her trusting loveliness had inspired him with a mad desire to get her away from the rancho and alone with himself.

Dolores looked at her Grandfather, obviously troubled. "The excitement might bring on another stroke—is it absolutely necessary for him to go?" turning around

she found Buckwell's dark eyes watching her.

In a flash he changed his expression to an impersonal frown. "It may be necessary for some member of the family to sign an application at the Court House for permission to—er—examine the records. The sooner that is done the better, of course.

Buckwell knew that this was a lame excuse. He watched Dolores to see if he was getting away with it and felt relieved when she nodded in assent.

"I—I would do anything to help. If you think I could sign the application—?" She paused.

Buckwell looked up quickly from his pretended contemplation of the papers and hiding his satisfaction with a matter-of-fact nod said, "Certainly you could—and perhaps you'd take tea with me—we could stop at the Crystal Palace on the way."

Dolores had no desire to accept the invitation. Last night's experience in San Francisco was too hideous and she was perfectly willing to remain ignorant of life along the Cocktail Route; beside, she hated to leave her Grandfather when he felt so miserable. She had grave fears of the heart attacks

that had become frequent in the last few months.

"I will go with you to sign the papers, but must hurry back to Grandfather—thank you just the same for the tea party invitation."

"It would not take more than a few minutes and I am sure you would enjoy the Crystal Palace—I would like to have the honor of showing it to you."

His kindliness and regret were so evident that Dolores hesitated. He was doing so much for them that she probably had no right to consider her own feelings in the matter and refuse. There was no one else she could turn to—her Grandfather was sick, Don Luis had pleaded other engagements and Terry—well, Dolores did not like to think of the way she had found him spending his time. Any minute she and her Grandfather might be forced from their home and if going to tea with Señor Buckwell would make him work any harder to help them she would go.

"Thank you, it will be very nice to go to tea if it will not, as you say, take long. Shall we leave now?"

Buckwell gathered up the papers and fol-

lowed her example by rising, "I am at your disposal—whenever you are ready!"

"In only a few moments, then." She fairly skipped from the room in her haste to have the trip over.

Following her with his eyes, Buckwell gloated over her graceful figure and charming youthful innocence. It had been a long time since he had taken such pains to make plans that included a woman. He smiled—partly at himself and partly in anticipation of the pleasures that would be his within the hour.

Upon leaving the room Dolores lost no time in seeking their only servant. "It is necessary that I go to town. Kindly look after Grandfather and if he should have another attack try and reach me—some way—I shall be at the Crystal Palace and the Court House with Señor Buckwell."

The old peon stood aghast with mouth open at the mere thought of a daughter of the Vasquez going out in this unconventional manner. He crossed himself devoutly and implored the Good Mother to watch over his mistress—two trips to the city in as many days! It was unheard of.

But Dolores had not waited to see what

he thought. Quickly possessing herself of a shawl and parasol she hastened back to the living room and stood looking at her Grandfather with a mingling of love, pity and regret that she must leave. Gently lifting his feet to a stool, so that he was stretched out in a more comfortable position, she spread a soft blanket over his knees, placed a pillow at his side and after a light kiss on his brow turned away to hide her tears. He was all she had in the world and he felt so miserable!

"I am ready," she announced, joining Buckwell at the mantel where he had been examining the Vasquez sword and trophies with utter contempt.

"Ready?" he repeated as if preoccupied. "Ah, yes, to be sure!" He turned toward her and his eyes opened in surprise.

"Ready indeed—ready for him!" he thought to himself. She was far more beautiful than the most notorious celebrity of the city and in addition to being lovely it was plain to see that life had taught her nothing of the ways of men. Controlling his rampant, hidden thoughts, Buckwell finished pleasantly, "Then shall we leave?"

"Yes, please," agreed Dolores and she

permitted Buckwell to assist her down the short steps and into his carriage. It had been at the side of the road, awaiting his signal for quite some time.

Back in the living room Vasquez slept soundly and on the table the open lid of the strong box revealed the fact that the age old land grant documents were gone. They were in Buckwell's pocket and as the carriage jogged along he decided that they, as well as the young girl by his side, were to remain in his possession—as long as he wanted them.

CHAPTER X

THE TRAP IS SPRUNG

Chris Buckwell did not own a carriage. He felt that his whereabouts could not be so easily spotted when he summoned a public hack to carry him to appointments.

But he always insisted upon immaculate modern equipment and fast horses. He found the latter far more satisfactory than the automobile which was growing in popularity with his political contemporaries.

Dolores' second trip to the City was consequently effected in less time than the regretable experience of her call on Terry.

"Do you come into San Francisco often?" inquired Buckwell watching closely through narrowed eyes.

"Grandfather has never permitted such trips," she replied truthfully after a moment's hesitation. "You see it is customary for Spanish women to remain at home."

She had decided that the hideous experience of the Poodle Dog was her own se-

cret—she was too ashamed of the incident to ever mention it to anyone.

"And do Spanish girls *always* adhere to their native customs and paternal dictates?" asked Buckwell in a tone that invited confidence. He was curious about why she went to Frisco on the previous night. Buckwell abhorred reticence in a woman.

"I don't know," replied Dolores uneasily, "but I prefer to remain at the hacienda—Oh, you can save it for us, can't you?"

"With your help, my dear, I am sure that your Grandfather will be able to spend the rest of his days there."

Buckwell's hidden meaning was lost on Dolores. How could she have guessed that he wanted *her* in return for relinquishing his plans to seize the estate?

"It is so good of you to help us!" she said warmly, and for the first time relaxed her rigid position in the corner of the carriage.

Buckwell noticed and with an effort restrained himself from grasping her graceful hands and drawing her toward him. There was a time and place for everything and both would come a little later.

"We will stop at the Crystal Palace and enjoy a cup of tea before transacting our

business. It is one of the more respectable haunts along the Cocktail Route and—I think you will find it more interesting than The Poodle Dog." He smiled directly at her.

Dolores turned crimson in confusion. "I have read about all of them"—she lied uneasily, "but do not really know about any of the town cafés—you forget that I said I have never been to San Francisco." She spoke haughtily.

"My mistake—" apologized Buckwell and began talking of other things. He wisely felt it would not be well to antagonize her so early in the game. "Perhaps I will have to be careful," he thought, "she is crafty for one so young."

When they entered the tea room Dolores was reminded of story book descriptions of an Oriental Palace. The mammoth crystal chandeliers, from which it probably derived its name, sparkled with lights even in the day time. The rotunda was a spacious circular hallway reached from wide heavily carpeted stairs. The curving walls of the unusual room were hung with lustrous draperies that concealed a maze of doors leading into public and private rooms of various descriptions.

This was all Dolores saw until half way up the stairs, then a gallery of nude pictures met her gaze. They were hung on a level with the eyes between the draped doorways.

"Oh!" she gasped in startled mortification and stood still. It was a shock to know that such pictures existed. She wanted to run down the stairs and back to the peaceful dignity of the rancho. But as she turned her eyes met the suave, leering countenance of the Captain of waiters.

"Right this way, Miss," he said and pushing past led the way toward a curtained recess.

Buckwell and other afternoon frequenters of the place were coming up the stairs. The rotunda was gay with strollers and Dolores decided that she had better close her eyes to the pictures and go on. She proceeded up the stairs but could not ignore them. A life sized portrait of a nude woman hung in its gilt frame beside the door they were to enter. Uncomfortable beyond description Dolores bowed her head as Buckwell smilingly ushered her into the handsomely appointed private room. She drew a sigh of relief—there were no objectionable pictures. It resembled an attractive apartment. There was

a small dining table, chairs, a buffet, couch and fireplace in which glowed a well-packed bed of coals.

Still uneasily Dolores walked to the fireplace while Buckwell gave his orders to the waiter in an undertone. She started nervously as she heard the door click. The waiter had departed and Buckwell was coming toward her.

"Would you like to remove your wrap?" he inquired solicitously, "the room is warm," and without waiting for her consent he lifted the shawl from her shoulders.

Dolores thought he was a little clumsy, but that was not the reason Buckwell fumbled. He found the fragrance of her sweet presence intoxicating and had no desire to hurry.

"Sit here," he invited, indicating the couch before the fire. "A pillow at your back, perhaps? And another for your feet?" He worked busily making her comfortable.

She drew back uneasily as his hand lightly grasped her ankles to slide an enormous velvet pillow beneath her feet. She could not have been more startled if a snake had run across her slippers. She was impatient with herself for being so on edge.

"Will—will—will tea be served soon?" she asked, eager to get away from the place.

"The waiter has gone for it now," he replied, lighting a long cigar with utter unconcern. He failed to add that it would not be served for an hour. Looking at Dolores long and appraisingly he sat down on the couch and continued, "You know the Vasquez lands are worth a fortune—but the Vasquez's have another treasure that is priceless."

Dolores did not understand his significant scrutiny.

"Really?" she leaned forward interestingly. "What is it?"

"Can't you guess?" and he reached for her hand.

Dolores shrank back. Her lustrous, startled eyes searched his face in amazement.

"I want to go home!" Trembling with nervousness Dolores tried to rise, but the pillow was in the way and before she could gain her feet Buckwell pulled her back to the couch.

"Don't worry," he remarked suavely, smiling at her obvious uneasiness. "I am going to save your property—but you must

remain and help. And though it will cost me much—I know I shall sometime be amply repaid." The nearness of her childish presence sweet and startled, made Buckwell cast discretion to the winds. "You are going to be the one to repay me and I will take the first payment now!"

Dolores's fingers pressed against her mouth but too late to restrain a frightened scream that ended in a stifled sob.

Dark eyes narrowing in anticipation Buckwell knelt on the couch and drew Dolores toward him. Alarmed into action by his obvious attitude of possession she managed to get to her feet but, bewildered and terrified, collided with the table in an effort to reach the door. Buckwell was at her side in a moment and both arms were about her body in greedy lust.

Her struggles were futile. She felt suffocated and ill at this first contact with burning passion. The palms of both hands covered her face and tears fell from between her fingers.

His ardor flamed by her desirable nearness, Buckwell buried his face in the warm soft curve of her neck and literally became intoxicated by its sweetness. His eager lips

and long moustache bruised Dolores's tender skin. It was all so hideous she could not believe she was alive. Her struggles were just as futile as if she were trying to escape a monster in a nightmare.

Buckwell finally succeeded in pulling her hands from her face and was bending over her desirable lips when the door unceremoniously burst open. He whirled quickly to curse the waiter for an untimely entrance.

Terry stood in the open doorway. He was breathless from hurrying and his eyes flashed angrily at the scene before him.

"What the devil brings you here?" stormed Buckwell releasing Dolores from unsatisfied arms.

She staggered and clutched at the table for support. Then dreading to meet anyone's eyes buried her face in her hands.

Buckwell shot his stiff cuffs into place, quickly straightened his large tie and gave the ends of his waxed moustache an upward twist. "You can be very busy with other people's business, can't you?" he threw at Terry sneeringly.

"You low-down cur!" Terry slammed the door behind him and crossed menacingly to the table.

Something familiar in the voice made Dolores turn. "Oh, Terry!" she cried, thankfully.

"So, you had him follow us, eh?" observed Buckwell. "I might have known you weren't as innocent as you pretended." His lips curled contemptuously at Dolores—the same lips that a moment before had been so eager to kiss her.

"That's a lie!" flared Terry bitterly. "I called at the Vasquez home to apologize for something that happened last night. When the servant said she was here with you—I knew something was wrong and took the same short cut back to follow you. It is a good thing I did." Terry approached Buckwell with clenched fists. "You damned skunk!" and with his opened hand hit Buckwell a resounding slap on the cheek.

Surprised at the attack Buckwell drew back and a volley of vile curses poured from his lips. But Terry's fighting Irish blood was aroused and he backed Buckwell into a corner with a volley of rights and lefts. Buckwell was slower, but many pounds heavier and every blow that he gave carried his full weight behind it.

Dolores stepped aside and watched breath-

lessly, in an agony of fear, lest Terry be hurt.

It was no time for idle sparring. Terry's anger was too much aroused. He wanted to avenge Buckwell's insult to Dolores without further delay. With a quick upper cut he crossed a right to Buckwell's chin that sent the Czar of the Tenderloin careening back over the divan where he sprawled, half stunned. Terry stood over him menacingly.

"You will regret this insult," fumed the disheveled Buckwell, brushing dust from his dark coat.

"You only got what you deserve, and you won't dare squeal," retorted Terry contemptuously, then turning to Dolores, "Do you know who he is?"

"Only his name and that he promised—he offered to help Grandfather and me keep the rancho."

"Well, he is Chris Buckwell—the very rotter who is trying to *steal* your home. It was he for whom my uncle tried to negotiate —that's how I know all about him. He is the biggest grafter in San Francisco!"

"Oh!" Dolores looked at Buckwell in amazement, then flared indignantly. "You the benefactor—are the man who is trying

to ruin us. You deceived my Grandfather and you tricked me into coming here!" her voice rang out clear and strong.

Buckwell felt her scorn but shrugged it aside with a smirk. His expression became cruel and he said with a leering smile, "You made but one mistake, my dear. I never *try* . . . I always *accomplish*. And I never waste time!" Bowing gracefully he turned his back on Dolores, then facing Terry continued in a cold, cruel tone, "For this insult it shall be my welcome pleasure to deal with you later." Turning on his heel in military fashion he calmly left the room with the air of a conqueror rather than that of the vanquished.

The two young people watched Buckwell until the door closed behind him.

Terry brushed his hair back into place with his hand and turning to Dolores said pleadingly, "I'm terribly sorry about last night, but after your fiancé arrived, I—I—" He paused awkwardly.

"My what?" questioned Dolores looking at him intently.

"Your fiancé—the young Spaniard—your Grandfather told me all about it," finished Terry bravely.

"And you believed him!" Dolores threw back her head and laughed. "He wants us to be engaged but we never have and I never will be—I don't like him enough—for—that." Dolores smiled and the very room vibrated with happiness.

Terry felt that he had been reborn into another world.

"Ah! Sure and I'm happy now!" he exclaimed. "Do you think you could like me well enough to be engaged—to me—right now?" he asked in a low excited voice. His eyes sought Dolores'.

"Yes," she laughed so softly that if he had been another inch farther away he could not have heard. She laughed because being engaged was something entirely strange and she had no idea what else was expected of her.

It was a new experience for Terry, too, but he had no hesitancy or doubts about what came next.

"Dolores—Dolores—I love you!" and his lips touched hers in the sweetest most precious kiss that either of them was ever to know.

"Darling—sweetheart! You've given me a new lease on life and we are going to

fight Buckwell so he doesn't get your ranch. —Did you wear anything around you—here it is, I have it," he continued excitedly. "Come on and let's see what we can do to beat Buckwell at his own game."

When the waiter arrived with tea the room was empty.

CHAPTER XI

THE HACIENDA IN DANGER

Chris Buckwell's boast that he never wasted time was not an idle one. The Tenderloin could have guaranteed that. Before the afternoon was over he had commissioned engineers to have the Vasquez property surveyed. He also started negotiations that would prove the old Spanish land grants to be invalid. Since Dolores spurned his advances he was more determined than ever to possess the ranch. Her lure for him had vanished. Love might move with languid steps but hate struck with a spider's speed. He took malicious delight in arranging for her and her Grandfather to be ousted by night. This accomplished to his satisfaction he retired to his private quarters and set about repairing the havoc Terry had worked in his appearance. While he was again applying this veneer of a gentleman, San Toy —the faithful little slave and very excellent spy—darted about making herself useful

A Warner Bros. Production.

"HE IS A MONGOL!"

Old San Francisco.

while she related current gossip of the underworld. It was another enjoyable system that Buckwell employed to prevent losing time.

Two hours later a surveying crew walked boldly into the Vasquez grounds, planted their transit above the private burial plot and ran a line directly toward the mission. Buckwell's orders were being carried out!

Terry and Dolores had returned from the Crystal Palace a short while before and were going through a packet of papers in the hope of finding something helpful.

"When Grandfather wakens from his nap he may know where there are others—but I think this is all we have." Dolores watched Terry worshipfully.

"The important ones seem to be missing," he mused, sorting over the documents. "I wish we had been able to locate my Uncle before leaving town—I am sure he will transfer his efforts to your interest when he knows what Bucknell tried to do."

"Isn't there anything we can do until tomorrow?" asked Dolores.

"I wish I could think of something, sweetheart, but I can't."

Their eyes and hands met across the table and in the joy of having discovered each other all troubles were for a moment forgotten.

"It's good to see some life around here!" greeted Don Luis cheerfully. Then he caught sight of Terry and stopped. "Pardon me, I did not know you had a guest," but he was curious enough to approach for a better look.

"This is Mr. O'Shaughnessy from San Francisco," supplied Dolores. "And Terry," she continued turning toward him, "I want you to know Don Luis, my childhood friend, who presents me with toads and worms and bugs whenever I have a birthday." Dolores laughed merrily.

Rising, Terry extended his hand. He meant it when he said, "I am more than glad to know you."

Don Luis quickly withdrew his hand and twirled his moustache. His eyes glared jealously. "I came to spend the afternoon with you;" the remark was directed to Dolores alone, "but was informed that you had gone into town and that your Grandfather was resting—I have been entertaining myself as best I could in the library." He was a bit

petulant in his annoyance at having been so surprisingly neglected.

"I am sorry if you have been lonely," said Dolores.

Terry found himself wishing she had not spoken in such a regretful tone. Although he was confident of Dolores's love it rankled a little to know that the Spaniard had shared her close friendship since childhood.

Don Luis was exceedingly annoyed. Dolores was his—as far as he was concerned—and he resented having a totally strange and apparently eligible and perhaps interesting stranger make himself so at home in her presence. He poured out a glass of wine and taking it to a chair a little remote from the table proceeded to sip it meditatively.

All three of them, suddenly startled by a noise in the patio, turned toward the doorway to see what was happening. The servant rushed in and stopping before Dolores quickly crossed himself and gasped several times for breath before he could speak.

"They come," he managed to say. "They carry chains—they drive poles into—the ground by the graves!"

"Hush!" silenced Dolores, with a quick

glance toward her Grandfather who was still dozing at the far end of the big room.

"When did they come?" broke in Terry in an undertone.

"Only now, Señor—there are many of them," and trembling excitedly he crossed himself again.

"What is the trouble? Who has come? What do they want?" Don Luis knew nothing about the threat to confiscate the Rancho and was completely mystified by the servant's announcement and the alarmed understanding of Dolores and Terry. He stood with mouth agape waiting vainly for someone to explain.

"Some men have come who have no right to be here," explained Terry briefly. "I'll go out and see about it." He put a comforting hand on Dolores's arm for a moment. "It would be unwise to alarm your Grandfather unnecessarily."

Dolores nodded in agreement; it was so wonderful having him around to decide things.

"Wait, Señor—" commanded Don Luis, stepping forward authoritatively, "it is my place to intercede for my host, and defend his honor, if need be." It was a grand ges-

ture. He was all puffed up with his own importance.

Before Terry could stop him he strode from the room.

"Won't *you* please go!" Dolores clutched Terry's hands in her excitement and he was strangely happy to discover that her trust and confidence were in him rather than Don Luis.

"Of course, sweetheart!" and because their love was so new and they thought no one was looking they stole a kiss.

Reluctantly Terry left her but before he had crossed the patio Dolores called out, "Wait—I'm coming, too!" and she raced after him.

Her unguarded shout awakened Vasquez from his nap with a start. Listening intently and looking all around he gradually became more thoroughly aroused. Instinct warned that something of importance was occurring. Tossing aside the robes that Dolores had covered over him he stood up and leaning against the chair for support looked around the room. His gaze settled on the cowering servant by the doorway.

"What has happened?" Vasquez demanded in a dazed, sleepy voice.

"Señor, there are men outside measuring the land—they think it is theirs." The old servant had been a part of the small household for so long that he knew all about their reduced circumstances and present difficulty.

"So—!" exclaimed Vasquez fiercely, "they have come!" His sleep bewildered brain tried to reason things out, and he wondered what had happened to the friend who was going to intercede in their behalf. It was a merciful blessing that he was ignorant of Dolores's trip into San Francisco with Buckwell. The old man's head went up and weakness vanished with his rising indignation.

The Vasquez name and honor were being desecrated; property rights of his first Spanish ancestors in America were being ignored and all because he was old and alone.

The sagging lines in Vasquez's face became set by the sheer strength and power of his determination. His narrow drooping shoulders lifted and blurred eyes took on a fierce glint.

"They cannot compel me to leave the home of my fathers—what has happened to the laws created for man's protection?" Vas-

quez muttered to himself, although the frightened servant cowering in the corner nodded silent agreement to the master he had known since childhood. With lengthened, tottering stride Vasquez strode to the fireplace and lifted his great sword from its niche above the mantle. His thin colorless lips kissed the beloved inscription on the hilt and the white head bowed as if in prayer. "A Vasquez Avenges A Vasquez!" he said, with a spark of his youthful vigor and strode out through the patio, grimly determined to defend his rights.

In the meantime Don Luis approached the surveying crew as they were driving a stake into the hallowed ground of the Vasquez burial plot.

"Stop!" he commanded holding up a protesting hand as he drew near.

The men looked at him, then at each other as if to say, "Well, what have we here?" They had never come across such a romantic figure in real life.

"As the friend and protector of the noble House of Vasquez," said Don Luis to one of the crew, "I demand that you retreat at once." Drawing himself up with assumed dignity he scowled menacingly.

The hard boiled Irishman who had been sent along with the surveying crew to drive stakes shifted his quid from one cheek to the other, sized up Don Luis from head to foot and finally spoke through a broad grin, "Aw, beat it—ye young garlic hound."

Don Luis's fiery Latin temperament flared and he emitted a volley of Spanish curses.

Forgetting that he had been instructed only to drive stakes the big Irishman stepped forward to meet the attack with a brawny arm and a hard looking fist.

Don Luis retreated with a few hurried steps but his high heels caught in the surveyor's chain between the stakes and he fell backward. It was the most ungraceful exit he had ever made. Money, pleasure and dignity were the three most desirable things in Don Luis's code of living and he suffered considerably when the "coarse laborers," as he mentally termed them, broke into spontaneous laughter. Quickly scrambling to his feet he assumed an injured air and hoped that Dolores and Terry had not seen the "accident."

They had, but were too intent upon the issue at hand to laugh or pause and offer sympathy. The one thing they realized was

that Don Luis had not been successful in his effort with the men.

"May I ask if you have legal authority to run lines through this property?" asked Terry of the surveyors.

"Sure—we got our orders today to come right out."

All of the men realized that they were dealing with a different character from Don Luis and the young spokesman did not hesitate to answer truthfully, besides he had caught a glimpse of Dolores standing by Terry's side and was willing to prolong the interview if it meant a longer chance to see her. He did not know girls could be so gorgeous.

"Have you a written permit?" questioned Terry.

"Yes, but it's only temporary," he felt in several pockets before he found it, then continued, "I'm told it will be made permanent this afternoon."

Terry accepted the paper and looked it over, a worried frown appearing as he read.

Dolores looked over his shoulder and after a moment asked softly, "What does it mean?"

"It is next to the last step necessary to

allow the work of destruction to go ahead."

Terry spoke in a low voice but the men could hear. In fact none of them could look away from Dolores. Her beauty was like a miracle and against the background of the old rancho she seemed a part of another world. The men also saw that her chin quivered and her eyes filled with tears when the young man explained the permit. They marveled that anything so lovely as Dolores could live in the old vine covered house with its cracked masonry and neglected grounds.

"You are within your rights," said Terry, returning the paper, "I have no legal right to stop you—however, I suggest that you wait."

The afternoon sunlight was casting fantastic shadows on the group as they stood by the old burial grounds, but just when the surveyor accepted the letter from Terry a different, a taller and more wavering shadow fell between them. There was something prophetic in the fact that it appeared on the heels of Terry's suggestion for the men to defer their work.

Looking up they saw a white haired old man standing before them with upraised sword. On his wrinkled face there was an

expression of grim determination and his eyes gleamed in wild fury. His appearance was that of an aristocratic gentleman suddenly bereft of his reason and the surveyors and workmen stepped back as one man when he shook his sword in the air.

"There is no right," he shouted, quivering with rage, "legal or otherwise that can take this sacred land of my fathers from me. This sword that wrested it from the wilderness will protect it from all invaders. . . ." He paused dramatically, not that it was done for effect but Vasquez was almost spent from so much exertion. Peering into the faces of the trespassers before him he was inspired by their apparent bewilderment to continue, "Begone!" he ordered brandishing the sword and lunging madly toward them.

Awed by the fierce, and what appeared to them insane, attack the men stepped aside and made room. In their haste they neglected to pick up the transit and Vasquez bore down upon the instrument with his sword and demolished it before anyone ventured to interfere.

"Begone—I say!" he continued to shout following the men as they retreated down

the hill. "No one can desecrate this property or take it from me while I live to defend what is legally mine!"

The men could not make out to what kind of a place they had been sent. First an extravagantly attired grandee accosted them, second, a dream of a girl appeared with a normal young man, then a raving old gentleman threatened to run them through with a sword. Driven down the hill toward the wagon that had brought them they decided to reload and return to town; no job was worth the risk of encountering the same end that the "crazy warrior" had meted out to the surveying instrument.

Don Hernandez Vasquez watched from the hill crest until the trespassers had loaded into the wagon and started away. Not for years had he experienced such a satisfactory sense of accomplishment as shone on his face when he came back to where Dolores, Terry and Don Luis were standing.

"I have driven them away!" he exclaimed triumphantly. "They shall not take my home away from me—it is all I have!" Nothing could have been more pitiful than Vasquez's longing to retain the ancestral holdings.

Don Luis had watched and listened to the entire proceeding with growing surprise. It was unthinkable that the Vasquez ranch was to be seized. He knew the property was invaluable and had counted upon acquiring all the acres when Dolores became his wife —in fact that was the reason he wanted her. She liked the Hacienda and when he became master it was his plan to again harvest the fields and revive the vineyards. In time there would be money to spend and he could go off and enjoy himself while Dolores remained in the beloved surroundings as a very charming young matron who would always welcome him when he chose to return.

This new development was most distressing. Trying to appear gallant, now that the trouble was over, Don Luis inquired uneasily, "Does this mean that you have lost your lands—lost everything?"

Vasquez muttered angrily. It was impossible to make out any words, but it did not matter, he was living in a world of his own and lovingly polishing his sword with a large silk pocket handkerchief.

"I am afraid it does," replied Dolores sadly. "We refused to sell and are being

forced out by an unprincipled politician who will take our land." She sighed and although no tears fell her eyes brimmed.

"Carramba!" exclaimed Don Luis, too taken aback to curb the outburst. It was an expression of personal disappointment, not regret for Dolores's misfortune. For a brief moment the mask of romance was lifted from his handsome countenance. It meant a complete readjustment of his future. "I am distressed that I cannot wait and serve you in some way, perhaps," he said, shaking his head with a fine show of sympathy, "but, señorita, I must return to Sacramento at once."

He could think of no quicker way out of the situation and he had no desire to waste any more time in futile courting since the true state of affairs had been revealed. Bowing his farewells—which were supposedly only temporary—Don Luis turned on his high heels and departed; a short way off he whirled about and waved a picturesque "adios" with the reminder that he would return in a few days. But he never did.

Dolores put her arm around Vasquez's shoulders. "Grandfather—Don Luis has gone—I am not proud of the second story

his blood has told—he is cowardly! I hate him!"

"There, there, my dear," and not knowing what else to do he patted her hand over and over again.

"We have one legal chance," interrupted Terry energetically. "I will hurry to town and try to obtain a restraining order before their permit is made permanent."

"And why do you say *'we,'* señor?" Vasquez looked at Terry piercingly as if conscious of his presence for the first time. "I recall telling you yesterday that we did not need your help."

"Grandfather, dear!" hastily interrupted Dolores, "it is different now—he has done so much for us. Mr. Buckwell was—was very rude to me and Terry fought him. Besides—"

"That is enough," interrupted Vasquez, "Señor, give me your hand and with it your forgiveness for my anger. And so, you defended my little girl!" He looked at her lovingly but his eyes told him that she was no longer a little girl, then he suddenly recalled what his Granddaughter had said. "But why should Señor Buckwell be unkind —it was he who was helping us."

"Terry, you tell Grandfather, please," pleaded Dolores.

"It is only this, Sir, Chris Buckwell, who came out here and posed as your friend is the very man who employed my Uncle to buy your property. When you refused to sell Buckwell decided to declare the Vasquez land grants invalid, then he became fascinated with your Granddaughter and when she repulsed him his next step was to hire surveyors to map out the land for him. It is against the law, but he is influential and can do it. He wants as much acreage around San Francisco as he can get."

There was more that Terry could have said but Dolores had warned him never to mention her trips into town nor anything detailed about the half hour at the Crystal Palace. She wanted to spare her Grandfather as much anguish as possible.

"I am grateful señor for all you have done." Vasquez inclined his head politely. "It was my error not to heed your warning yesterday—my child here," reaching for Dolores's hand, "believed in you and—"

"Oh, yes, Grandfather," she interrupted, "I—I more than *believe* in him—I—," her

eyes sought Terry's with their wonderful message of love.

"Yes, Señor Vasquez, I have asked—" then Terry stopped. He saw that Vasquez was not even conscious that he was there.

Sword in hand the fine old gentleman stalked away, mumbling to himself, "I shall guard my land and my property as I did when the Gold Rush came—I shall kill if need be. No one but a Vasquez shall own these lands!"

The two young people watched while he took his place before the ruined entrance. He leaned against the broken masonry with his sword at rest and watched with eagle eyes to see that no one passed by the mission on the road that led from town. He was a pathetic figure, holding on, through courage and pride, to all that he held dear in life.

"Poor Granddaddy," Dolores tried to choke down a sob, "we must not disturb him, but I will stay and watch until you return from town."

"All right, sweetheart," nodded Terry in assent, "I will try and return before dark with an injunction, even though it be a temporary one."

Their eyes met, and closed to hold the love

that each saw reflected in the other's face. As though drawn by some irresistible force Terry advanced until he was close to Dolores, so close that their hands clasped at their sides and their lips met in a quick kiss that was so terrifying in its sweetness that Terry hurried away.

Long after he was out of sight Dolores stood alone, watching and dreaming. Her thoughts were swept away from sordid reality by the sheer ecstasy of his caress. She wanted him back and began counting the seconds until his return.

And a few feet away stood another sentinel, sword in hand, counting the moments until Buckwell or one of his satellites arrived to carry out the nefarious scheme.

Vasquez was prepared to give up his life in defense of his beloved property.

CHAPTER XII

DOLORES IS LEFT ALONE

THE hour of California's magnificent sunset had come and still Vasquez and Dolores stood guard.

With night approaching, bringing the advent of another day that much nearer, their thoughts were concerned with what was in store for them. No place to go, no friends to consult, no money to draw from! It was a cruel outlook for a chivalrous old nobleman who had grown up with the ancestral acres and enjoyed life in a carefree, indolent manner that harmed no one except himself. His present dilemma was the result of having relinquished business and farming activities to sit back and enjoy life with utter disregard for all responsibilities. Yet, regardless of what Señor Vasquez had or had not done the land belonged to him and the expression on his face, brooked ill for anyone who dared trespass.

Dolores sat on the mossy ground beneath

a great tree with knees cradled in her arms, looking at the hacienda. The brilliant reflection from the setting sun turned all its windows to gold and the soft breeze that was fast dying down stirred the ivy covered walls and made the place seem alive. Her eyes could find no fault with the picturesque old structure. The instinct for a home was deeply planted in Dolores's young breast. She could not bear the thought of going away from the surroundings that had always been so dear. She wanted to live there with Terry, and have him become master of the weed-filled fields and neglected vineyards, as well as of her heart and ancestral home.

The lone servant ambled about the deserted dining room and shook his head as he cleared away the untouched repast. The sound of someone walking through the patio drew him quickly to the open doorway.

"May I be of service, señor?" he asked with deference, upon seeing a man crossing to the open yard beyond.

The man was Buckwell. Startled by a voice from the dark interior he whirled about and it took him several seconds to discern the dim shape in the doorway.

"Where's your master?" he snarled upon

making sure it was the lone servant of the place.

"Outside, señor," came hastily from the cringing peon.

"Where— outside?— Now don't lie to me or I'll break your neck."

"By the mission—the chapel, señor—the chapel!" and two gnarled hands came up protectingly before his face.

With a grunt of satisfaction Buckwell hitched his cane in the crook of his arm and picked his way gingerly across the roughly tiled patio to the path beyond. Having visited the Chapel on his first call at the rancho he knew where to go.

As soon as he came within range of Vasquez's vision the elderly sentinel straightened up from his weary vigil and firmly clutched his sword with half numbed fingers. His knuckles were white from strain.

"You—you have dared return," trembled Vasquez savagely. "You who have betrayed my hospitality and sought to defile my home! Begone—before it is too late!" He stood with outstretched arm and eyes blazing with fury.

At the sound of angry voices Dolores stopped her twilight dreaming and watched

intently from behind the tree. After the incident at the Crystal Palace she was reluctant to confront Buckwell but wanted to be near so that she could watch her Grandfather.

"Cut out the romance," remarked Buckwell impatiently to Vasquez, "and listen to reason. I've got a warrant to take you into court for interfering with my surveyors."

Vasquez drew in a quick breath of shocked surprise.

Noting that his threat had caused the desired alarm, Buckwell continued, "Oh, yes, I know all about it and the company will sue you for smashing their instrument," he smirked in satisfaction over the other's discomfiture.

"You have got to vacate this place by noon tomorrow—understand?" he shook his fist emphatically before Vasquez's face.

Buckwell's words and intolerable rudeness electrified Vasquez, and inflamed by an increasing anger, he said bitterly, "You seek to dishonor my name." Madly bearing down upon Buckwell he continued with upraised sword, "But a Vasquez Avenges a Vasquez!"

"Are you crazy?" cried Buckwell in alarm, and frightened by this exhibition of ferocity, he hastily stepped back.

Quivering with rage Vasquez followed Buckwell's retreat, step by step. Extending his sword he lunged viciously at his betrayer's heart. But the exertion was too great. His waning strength ebbed from his arm and the sword sagged before it touched its intended victim. Tottering uncertainly for a moment, Vasquez plunged forward to the ground.

The promise made hours before was kept. Hernandez Vasquez had defended property and name with his very life!

Buckwell looked down at the prostrate form, his lips still twisted in a sneer. There was no doubt in his mind about the "old man" being dead. It simplified matters considerably to have him out of the way. The young granddaughter was difficult to deal with, but Bucknell knew from experience how to handle such matters. He knew of a hundred ways whereby young girls could be disposed of and no one ever learn their fate. With a shrug of indifference he straightened up from his contemplation of Vasquez's body and was amazed at being

confronted by the silent, accusing presence of Dolores.

Her great eyes peered at him as though he were a loathsome monster. He had just committed an irreparable injury and she was powerless to strike back. With a cry of anguish she dropped to her knees and bent over the inert form.

"Granddaddy!" she called softly. There was no answer. "Granddaddy!" With loving careful hands she turned his face from the ground. The lifeless eyes stared blankly. "Oh! Dear God!" she sobbed, and for a moment pressed hot fingers against her own eyes to blot out the sight and realization of what had happened. Biting her lips to keep down the sobs, and blinking fast to keep back scalding tears, Dolores removed the lace shawl from her shoulders and placed it gently beneath her grandfather's head. Bowed in grief she lingered to offer a prayer for his soul and noticed that the Vasquez sword was lying beside his still white hand. Without hesitancy she picked it up. Through tear-blinded eyes the family crest and famous inscription appeared dim and far away, but this superficial blur did not cloud their meaning. Dolores knew that

she was the last of the Vasquez line and her desire for revenge could not have been stronger had she been a man in the prime of life. For the time being, grief and sadness were put aside and in their place was born a terrible fury, a fury devoid of fear, perhaps an inheritance from her courageous pioneer ancestors.

"You came to taunt a noble gentleman," she said accusingly, the sword held fondly in her arms, "his soul is now with God who is also a God of vengeance."

Slowly she rose from her prayerful attitude beside the lifeless form of her only relative. She was an appealing and pitiful little figure, so alone and brave in her sadness that it is difficult to understand why even Chris Buckwell's heart was not softened.

His nature lacked the "something" that goes to make up the finer things of life and when Dolores paused, a slight smile of amusement suffused his face. Her pride and courage impressed him merely as an elaborate exhibition of heroics. Grief for the death of a grandfather was beyond his ken.

Angered by Buckwell's maddening indif-

ference Dolores glared at him with hatred blazing from her eyes. She scrutinized so long and intently that Buckwell was secretly conscious of a slight surprise at her grim wrath.

Hovering in the background the peon had been an awed witness to his master's death and ever mindful of observing all customs in connection with the rancho he hastened within the chapel to toll the bells that indicated the passing of a Vasquez's soul, and as he went he crossed himself devoutly.

When the first sound of the old mission bells broke the twilight stillness Buckwell's smile faded. He shivered, perceptibly, uncomfortable from the ghostlike sound.

Dolores had not taken her accusing eyes from his face. "A Vasquez Avenges A Vasquez!" she said in a penetrating whisper.

Buckwell turned quickly.

With sword upraised, as though it were a cross, she stood motionless. Twilight shadows played about her head and formed a flickering halo—as if she were sanctified to be the avenger of her blood.

A trifle awed and miserably annoyed by the mournful ringing of the bell Buckwell backed away. Dolores followed slowly, still

holding the sword of vengeance before her and still silent and grim as if moved by some phantom spirit.

Buckwell could not shake off the fear that clutched his heart. Anything connected with religion or the supernatural touched his greatest weakness. The life of deception he had led and the sins he had committed against his own race made him fear the vengeance of his own Gods as well as the possible ill will of the Christian deity.

Backing into a niche in the Chapel wall, Buckwell came to a stop and instinctively extended his arm in protection. His hand came in contact with something unusual to the touch and turning around he recoiled at the sight before him. . . . It was a statue of the Virgin Mary! More awed than ever he turned away and resting his arm on an outside sill removed his hat to wipe his moist brow. As he did so he chanced to glance through the open window and his eyes rested upon a large crucifix. He stared as if hypnotized. The last light of evening filtered through the windows and gave the image a strangely lifelike appearance. Hastily turning away he found Dolores still confronting him. So intense was her yearn-

ing to know what was right to do that she appeared to be in a trance, asking her ancestors—all represented by the graves in the cemetery back of her—to give some sign that would point the way to a just and satisfactory vengeance.

Buckwell feared no living man. The gruesome horrors of the underworld gave him not a qualm, he had no respect for morals, he knew that his mind could triumph when matched against any of his contemporaries, but there was one thing that loosed his nerves and struck terror to his soul, and that was the Christian Religion or anything pertaining to it. As he looked around there were tormenting reminders of it on all sides. The image in the niche, the crucifix, the chapel bells, the graveyard and the lovely figure of Dolores with upraised sword who resembled an avenging angel.

The peon did not cease ringing the mournful death knell and without warning he pulled harder on the bell rope and the clamor was deafening to Buckwell, who stood below as though petrified by the sound.

"Stop those accursed Christian bells!" he shouted, covering his ears to shut out the clamor.

It was perhaps a touch of the childish oriental superstition in Buckwell that made him fear an unknown punishment from the Gods he had ignored while pretending to be an irreproachable Christian.

"No, they are ringing for Grandfather," said Dolores distinctly. "He would want them to—ring. It is a message to God that his soul is coming." Her chin quivered and tears flooded her eyes.

The bells seemed to chime louder and louder and Buckwell's expression became more and more terrified. As his terror grew the mask of western veneer, that he had so painstakingly trained his features to assume, vanished. The heathen soul of the Mongol was revealed! It was the first time outside of his own quarters that Chris Buckwell had been thrown off guard. His features sagged, his eyes became squinting slits and even his long carefully trained mustache drooped. His was unmistakably the face of a Chinaman peering at Dolores as though he were compelled to confront all the devils of his own belief and conscience. It was a horrified countenance, livid and stricken.

If Dolores had suddenly been given a

glimpse into another world peopled by strange beings she could not have been more startled and amazed than at that momentary flash of Chris Buckwell, the Chinaman.

"Oh! You hideous thing!" she breathed in repulsion. A terrible revulsion of feeling took possession of her. The man she and her Grandfather had trusted and honored with their hospitality was nothing more than an Oriental! He had held her in his arms—touched her with his lips! It was all too hideous to think about, and without warning Dolores—the last of the famous old family—bore down upon him, with the great sword, determined to avenge the insult.

A new terror seized Buckwell when he realized that he had dropped his mask and revealed his real self to Dolores. Aroused to action by her menacing approach, coupled with the realization that his secret had been discovered, he turned and ran from the mission like a man fleeing from a wild beast. The mournful death knell followed him down the hill and far along the road on his way back to town.

With intense vehemence Buckwell cursed the weakness that had caused the disastrous

revelation. He knew that Dolores had penetrated his disguise and again he emitted a volley of oaths.

"Women always squeal, too!" he mused. "Well, I might better be dead than have her tell what she knows—an investigation would make bad matters worse. There is only one thing to do—get rid of her—it can be done, easily!" and Chris Buckwell resumed his old smirk of confidence while his scheming brain began devising plans for Dolores's abduction.

Both arms around the sword, pressing it close to her breast, Dolores rested her cheek against the hilt. She wondered what Buckwell intended to do about the rancho in the face of new developments. But that worry paled into insignificance beside her new grief.

"Oh, Granddaddy!" she cried and with heart almost breaking knelt on the ground beside his body and reverently placed the sword between them. Then she bowed her head and silently said a prayer which ended with a vow to avenge his death.

An owl took up his night stand in the big tree overhead and still Dolores mourned beside her Grandfather.

Terry had not returned.

CHAPTER XIII

DOLORES PLOTS VENGEANCE

THE fast horses that Buckwell had engaged for the trip to the Rancho carried him back to town in record time. Without hesitating in the outer chambers he hurried to his underground quarters.

"Have Jimmie upstairs within the hour!" he commanded shortly of San Toy who waited with willing and eager hands to relieve him of hat and cane.

"Yes, Yes, it is done," she nodded understandingly but in her heart wondered what new scheme her master was plotting that he needed his favorite spy.

San Toy was truly an exotic flower of the Orient—a beautiful little bit of humanity to look upon and as clever and cunning mentally as the master she served so loyally and for whom she had given up everything. Buckwell had a mysterious power that he could exert at will, and although he had long since ceased trying to exert it over San Toy

A Warner Bros. Production.

ON THE THRESHOLD OF DISHONOR.

Old San Francisco.

she was always his willing slave and happy to reflect his moods, do his bidding and be ready when it pleased him to want her.

She had seen little of Buckwell lately and would like to have sat at his feet while he smoked and perhaps played with her ear while he laid plans for some campaign. However, his word was law and with only a reluctant backward glance, that he did not trouble to notice, San Toy darted away through a maze of underground passageways to a notorious gambling hall where Jimmie could usually be found.

Divesting himself of frock coat Buckwell slipped into the handsome mandarin creation and knelt at his own Chinese shrine, before the God of his real fathers. Rocking to and fro he prayed in a frenzy to the Buddha on the altar before him—the Buddha whom he had cheated and whom he feared would some day conspire with the Christian God to work his ruin.

"Forgive me! Forgive me!" he ended his prayer aloud, then continued muttering in an undertone.

"So—you have sinned *again,* my brother," shouted the dwarf gleefully, pressing his hideous, grinning face against the win-

dow as he clung to the bars and held himself up after the fashion of a long armed monkey. "And now you seek solace of a God whose feet even you are not worthy to touch."

A wild peal of laughter filled the room and Buckwell shuddered. Many times he had cursed himself for lacking the courage to kill the deformed brother whose discerning mind always detected his faults and taunted him with his transgressions. It would have been a relief to send him away but even that was impossible because he would talk and reveal their nationality, the one thing that Buckwell took every precaution to conceal. No, the only safe place for his brother was locked up in the wall cage that had been made especially for him in Buckwell's private underground sanctuary, the secret room that could be reached only through hidden doors and a strange bewildering passageway.

Again shrieking laughter filled the room. The dwarf knew that it maddened Buckwell and it was his only means of torment. He delighted to employ it—long and often.

"Shut up! You scum of hell!" yelled Buckwell.

"You curse, my brother—that is one sin *more!*" he stopped laughing and continued grimly: "Is it any comfort to me that some inner sense always tells me when you sin, and I must wait impatiently to witness the sight of your cringing, hypocritical penitence. Talk to me! I have no one with whom to exchange ideas—but I know—oh, yes, I know!" and again he laughed and added to the din by rattling the bars of his cage.

"Keep quiet, you damned imbecile!" Angered beyond control Buckwell rose from his knees and strode toward the barred window, his face distorted with rage.

"Kill me—I am ready—I wait patiently for death to release me from this inferno." The dwarf stopped laughing and looked expectantly at his brother.

Buckwell halted—he wanted to crush the life out of that gnarled little body but feared the wrath of his Gods too strongly. With bowed head he turned back to the altar, fell on his sacrilegious knees and swayed in prayer.

The unfortunate brother smiled knowingly and took malicious delight in interspersing taunting chuckles with his brother's chanted prayer.

After a half hour's devotions Buckwell cast aside the influence of his blood inheritance and again assuming the attire and facial expression of a wealthy leader of the western world went above to his sumptuous living room and found Jimmie awaiting his orders.

Until further notice they were simply this, "Don't let Dolores Vasquez get out of your sight. I want to know everything she says and does or plans to do. If you fail me, it's your last 'call,' understand?" Buckwell glared menacingly.

Jimmie understood and lost no time in getting on the job.

* * * * * * *

It was a pitifully small gathering of friends who paid the last final tribute to Hernandez de Vasquez, and Dolores was the only relative. But the fine old gentleman was buried as he had lived—according to the ancient custom of his house.

The last male member of the Vasquez family was laid at rest in the burial ground of his ancestors close by the walls of the famous old mission.

During the sad, grief-stricken days that immediately preceded the ceremony Terry

had been Dolores's mainstay; he was the only one upon whom she could now depend.

Of Don Luis, the so attentive young Spaniard of but a few weeks previous, nothing was heard except a belated letter of condolence. To be sure one or two of her grandfather's old friends offered aid, but their suggestion was given in such a half-hearted manner that Dolores felt she could do nothing but refuse as gracefully as possible.

She was truly alone. The old peon was helpful, in a feeble sort of way, but he had loved his master deeply and was so broken up that he was of very little value except to do the regular household chores.

Terry's daily visits were eagerly anticipated and as regretfully ended, but more and more Dolores came to realize how utterly alone she was, and that the heavy burden of saving the Vasquez heritage had been transposed to her shoulders. She was determined, however, to avenge her grandfather and bring his slayer to justice—for she felt that Buckwell had truly killed him. But she was weak and Buckwell was so powerful that she despaired of being able to do it, and fearful to even meet him.

Had she known that every move she made

was watched by one of his spies and that every visit of Terry's had been reported back to San Francisco she would have been even more terrified.

Immediately after her grandfather's burial as she and Terry sat by the patio fountain discussing the best way to meet the situation, her hands clenched convulsively and she turned to him saying, "Oh! I know I should not have trusted him—I should never have let him enter our home."

"I know, my dear, but when he came you did not know who he was, and Buckwell is clever! He would not have such power and influence in San Francisco unless he had the ability to bend others to his will. Don't take it to heart. You were not to blame," consoled Terry, cradling her hand in his.

"Perhaps not, but if I had only known then that he wasn't a white man, I would have suspected something," continued Dolores.

Terry started perceptibly. "Not a white man? What do you mean?" he hurt her hand without realizing his clasp had tightened.

"Oh, Terry, I forgot to tell you—Señor Buckwell is an Oriental—a half-caste China-

man! I am sure of it." Terry leaned forward intently as she continued, "The day—that Grandfather died, when Señor Buckwell was here—and I accused him of being responsible for Grandfather's death—and even threatened him with the sword—he underwent a complete transition—he was terrified and kept looking at me and into the chapel—and then such a queer change came over him—he looked exactly like a Chinaman—he even mumbled something about Christian bells—and then turned and fled as if someone was chasing him. Oh, if I could only avenge Grandfather—A Vasqueth Avenges A Vasquez—and I am the last of the family to do it."

Dolores paused. She was overcome with emotion and Terry looked at her with a faraway expression. Suddenly, he said grimly, "Dolores, we've got Buckwell at last! He has been delivered into your hands! Don't you see it, dear? As a white man, Buckwell has been persecuting the Chinese—they hate and despise him even though they fear him. But if he is revealed as one of their own race, they will stop at nothing to effect his ruin." Dolores smiled slowly as the possibility became clearer to her. Terry contin-

ued, "The thing to do is to see Lu Fong, the leader of the six tongs that rule Chinatown. I will see him for you and tell him what you have discovered."

Dolores shook her head proudly, "No, Terry,—A Vasquez Avenges A Vasquez—I will go with you to Lu Fong and tell him myself—to-night."

"You can't do that, dear, you mustn't. It is impossible, and risky. No girl should venture into such a place. I can do it for you just as well. Don't think of it—please?"

But Dolores was insistent. The chance to fulfill her obligation to her lineage thrilled her with eager anticipation and quickly pulling Terry by the hand she led him into the living room.

As soon as they disappeared from view a skulking figure arose from behind a bush, near the fountain where Dolores and Terry had been sitting, and made off toward the gateway to the road that led into San Francisco.

It was "Jimmy." If he had ever had any other name it had long since been forgotten. Not that it mattered either to him or to those with whom he mingled, for one name

was about as good as another and as easy to acquire. Jimmy was a typical hardboiled alley rat and with his hat pulled down over his eyes and a cigarette stuck in one corner of his lips he was no one with whom to become better acquainted with. But more than that Jimmy was a stool pigeon for the Czar of the Tenderloin—Chris Buckwell. No one knew it but Jimmy and Buckwell and that made him all the more useful to the leader of the underworld. All the gossip, that was rife in the haunts of those who lived without the law, found its way into Jimmy's ears and sooner or later reached Buckwell—much to Jimmy's profit and Buckwell's satisfaction. Buckwell was a hard master, but he paid well when properly served.

Jimmy knew this from past experience and chuckled to himself as he made his way toward the city. "Gee!" he thought, "the boss is sure one clever bird. Here I am tailin' these two love birds for a couple o' days and nuttin' stirrin'—and then just when I'm gettin' ready to report 'nuttin' doing'—along comes this Terry guy and wises the jane to the whole works. And me sittin' pretty takin' it all in. Gawd! but the boss oughta pony up plenty for this bit

o' news." And he whistled contentedly as he walked along.

Back in his living room, in Sierra Street, Buckwell sat idly mulling over the events of the last few days. His eyes had an ugly gleam as he thought of the manhandling that had been meted out by Terry, or his failure to hold the regard of Dolores, and the advisability of postponing his seizure of the Vasquez ranch. "I will make them pay!" he soliloquized, "sooner or later." The old man's death removed one obstacle but it had also served to delay matters. He would have to lie quiet for awhile, at least until things had calmed down and been forgotten. It was a good plan putting Jimmy on the job to keep him advised of all that happened up on the hill.

It was rather a strange coincidence that Jimmy should be announced just as Buckwell had been thinking about him. He gazed uneasily at the doorway as Jimmy entered and came toward him. He could tell by the eagerness of the spy's approach that he had something important to divulge, but sat grimly at ease while he muttered a mere, "Well, what is it?"

Jimmy launched into his story without

delay, "Boss, they think they're wise to you. The jane's got a nutty idea that she spotted you for a Chink the day the old man kicked in." (Buckwell flinched but watched with tightening lips as Jimmy continued.) "She just spilled the beans to young Terry. It didn't mean nuttin' to her until he wised her what to do. They're gonna squeal to Lu Fong and are pattin' theirselves on the back that it's gonna make trouble for you. They were just startin' when I left—and by now they're wit' him unless somethin' happened."

Buckwell jumped to his feet, moistening his lips nervously.

"Jimmy," he said, "this lie might cause serious trouble. We must act quickly. Stand by me now and your fortune is made." Jimmy nodded. "And now," continued Buckwell, "you beat it pronto to Lu Fong's and keep me advised. And here, take this—when you want more let me know." And he dumped a handful of gold coins into Jimmy's waiting palms.

Jimmy slid through the door like a shadow.

CHAPTER XIV

NIGHT LIFE IN A CHINESE CAFÉ

A GREAT happiness took possession of Terry—the kind of peaceful contentment that only a man in love can feel when he begins doing favors for the woman of his heart. The carriage that had brought him out to the rancho was headed back toward San Francisco's Barbary Coast and Dolores was at his side.

They were on their way to Lu Fong's to report Dolores's discovery regarding Buckwell. To anyone who passed them on the road they were merely a remarkably handsome couple, deeply engrossed in one another and apparently enjoying an evening's drive. Nothing about them indicated tragedy and vengeance except, possibly, the fact that Dolores wore mourning. It was the only costume she had ever owned that was totally devoid of Spanish influence. It was essentially modern and ravishingly becoming Terry noticed it.

"Dolores, you are beautiful!" he whispered confidingly holding her hand on the cushion beside him. She stirred happily. "I love you with Spanish lace affairs on your head. You carry a parasol fetchingly! I am liking them for the first time in my life, but—I prefer you in a modern hat—it makes you look more real, and I want you to be very real, dear."

"Then I shall keep my hat on all the time," laughed Dolores, pushing it down more securely on her head.

"And that would be a crime!" he objected quickly, "your hair is too splendid to be covered. No, on second thought I love you most without anything to cover your hair." But the look in his eyes indicated that if she wore a mussed sunbonnet he would love her just the same.

Dolores was slightly abashed by such ardent admiration, although she found herself wanting him to say lover-like words and hold her hand forever. Nothing else could keep back the sobs and bring momentary forgetfulness of the fact that her Grandfather was dead.

For a while they rode on in silence.

"The Chinamen we are going to see,"

asked Dolores curiously, "what will they do to Señor Buckwell?"

"I don't know just what, but they will make it pretty uncomfortable for him. In fact, it will be the last of Buckwell as a power in Frisco."

"It should be!—He can't take the ranch away from us now, can he?" it was a new and hopeful thought.

"There is nothing he can't do unless he is locked up and under guard, and we know that he is trying to have the old Spanish grants declared invalid. By the way, I have not had a chance to tell you—my Uncle is no longer doing Buckwell's legal work!" there was a ring of pride in Terry's voice.

"Oh, Terry, I am glad," cried Dolores impulsively, more for his sake than her own, because she knew what a heartache the combine had been to him. "What made him give it up?"

Her eyes searched his so trustingly that he could not lie.

"Why—why I told about what a rotter Buckwell had been to you and Uncle also found out that Buckwell had double crossed him on a deal, so he said he was 'through.' I hope he meant it—I believe he did."

Again they rode on in silence.

"You seem so far away," complained Terry from his corner of the carriage, "may I come nearer?"

Dolores was elusively desirable and he was fearful of startling her.

"Yes—you may," she replied so faintly that if he had not already moved nearer he could not have heard.

She was uncomfortably happy. There is such a state when one is in love. She had never wanted Don Luis to even kiss her finger tips. She hated to have him call her "sweet Señorita," and he always did! She dreaded being left alone with him, and his sentimental flattery annoyed her. But with Terry it was different. She craved his touch and drank in his every word and gesture. She liked everything he did, and said, and after they avenged her Grandfather's death she would ask nothing more from life than to be with him.

It was what Terry wanted too, and as the carriage drew into the radiance of San Francisco's lights he asked earnestly, "Dolores, when will you marry me?" then he hastened to add before she had time to answer, "Don't say later than a month or I

can't stand it—I want you for my very own, dear—soon!"

"And I want you to have me!" replied Dolores. Their eyes melted into each others. "I could not have lived through the last few days if it had not been for you."

"God bless you, my darling—but when will you marry me?"

"Almost any time, Terry, I don't think it would be disrespectful to Grandfather's memory. It is so lonely at the rancho alone and if Señor Buckwell takes it away from me I wouldn't know what to do."

"Look here!" commanded Terry with a fine show of sternness, "are you going to marry me just for the sake of having a roof over your head?"

"You know I am not," replied Dolores with gravity, "I am going to marry you because—I love you," and she looked at him with such an adorably sweet expression that he wanted to crush her in his arms and never let her go.

"That is the first time you have said it, sweetheart! Glory, but it sounds great!"

At this point in their conversation they drew up to the entrance of Lu Fong's café. Their quest for the head of the Inner Circle

had led them to the threshold of as dangerously famous a haunt as existed within the Golden Gate.

"Wait until we return," Terry instructed the driver.

They entered the dimly lighted café.

Dolores appeared as out of place as an exquisite orchid in a rank weed patch. She instinctively recoiled. Terry took her arm reassuringly.

"Don't worry, dear, we will not have to stay here long. Lu Fong has an office some place in the building—I will find out how we get to him."

Still holding her protectingly by the arm, Terry beckoned to a waiter. As the white aproned servitor approached Terry said, "We must see Lu Fong at once, it is important."

The waiter stuck his shiny black tray under his arm and eyed Dolores with interest, "I'll pass on the word. I don't know much about the inner diggings of the place myself. Take a seat while ye're waitin'." and indicating a small table near the doorway he went out, whistling.

Dolores looked slowly around the enormous café. It was filled with a crowd rep-

resenting almost every nationality and every walk of life. Some had come because it was a habit, others out of curiosity. The café was a good place in which to indulge one's appetite, no matter of what nature they chanced to be. Chinese waiters were scurrying about serving food. For a few moments Dolores was fascinated watching some real Chinamen at a nearby table eat their native dishes with long chopsticks.

One side of the room was lined with partially secluded booths, from which issued either no sound at all or a volume of voices. The opposite wall was backed with French plate mirrors and an elaborate rosewood bar. It was without doubt the most active section of the entire room. Although Lu Fong's was a Chinese café, tea was seldom ordered. Plain American beer and whiskey were the popular beverages and they were served in great profusion. Whiskey was bought by the barrel and was a tremendous source of graft for some of the white bosses.

The café bar was a room of many doors. To all who gave the matter their consideration it was easily observed that one door *never* opened *into* the room. It was an exit only but bore no label. What happened to

the people who crossed its threshold at rare intervals was a source of much speculation. Those who came out, by another exit, never told of their experiences, while still others never reappeared to give an account of themselves. It led to a certain back room and from thence down, down into the maze of underground passages where one was as lost as in the labyrinth of Corinth without a guide.

Singing entertainers, both men and women, worked their way through the aisles or paused at a table now and then to help along the general hilarity of the evening, which had not yet reached its height.

Dolores shuddered and turned away as she saw a young white girl having dinner with an apparently wealthy Chinese merchant. There was a lustful gleam in the man's eyes and the girl put her hand in his with a significant look and calloused laugh that meant their evening together was just beginning.

It reminded Dolores of her encounter with Buckwell and she wondered how any girl could endure the society of a Chinaman. Her three trips to the Barbary Coast were awakening her mind to life as it was lived

by people who did not care, or whose ideals were of an entirely different calibre from her own.

Looking away from the ill-suited couple Dolores noticed a man—all alone at a neighboring table. He was laughing and going through the motions of making an imaginary, something—animal perhaps—sit up and jump over his finger. She wondered why his face should be so white and pinched. He suddenly stopped laughing, rubbed his upper lip nervously, burst into tears, and buried his face in extended arms on the table.

"Terry," whispered Dolores, "what do you suppose is the matter with that man over there, the one with his head on the table?"

Following her direction, Terry replied, "Why, I guess he had too much to drink or else he is a dope; there are hundreds of them around—the Chinamen bring the stuff in."

"How pitiful!" Dolores did not care to look about the room any more. "I hope we do not have to wait much longer."

They didn't. The fat, suave, Chinese manager approached with the long aproned waiter.

"You—send for me?" he smiled, bowing low before them.

"We want to see Lu Fong," replied Terry.

"I—not know!" the gleam of lurking suspicion in his eyes belied the stupid reply.

"What's the matter—isn't he here?" Terry spoke sharply.

The manager immediately assumed a vacant expression and shook his head, "I—not know," he said again.

Controlling his exasperation Terry eyed the yellow man sternly. "It may interest him to know that we possess information which could place Chris Buckwell in his power."

The effect of his announcement was disappointing.

The Chinaman showed only a flicker of interest, then he glanced at Dolores. She became uncomfortable and clutched Terry's arm. Apparently her appearance pleased and decided the manager.

Guiding Dolores by the arm and having no intention of letting her out of his sight until the errand was finished they followed the guide the entire length of the room into a vacant booth at the other end.

"You wait," he instructed them briefly, "I come back."

"It is all so mystifying and sordid!" observed Dolores, "I wish there was some other way we could accomplish our purpose."

"Never mind, dear, don't pay any attention to the people." Terry placed a chair so she would not have to look into the main room, then moving closer he held her hand protectingly.

Their attempt for seclusion was useless. A sailor and his disreputable looking companion were ushered into the booth and took possession of the two remaining chairs.

"Two beers," ordered the sailor, but looking up he saw Dolores. It had been his luck to visit almost every port of the world but never before had he come across such beauty in a woman. "God, I've missed my ship for janes that couldn't sail the same seas with her!" he thought to himself, then aloud, "Waiter, make that *three* beers," and to Dolores's horror he grinned at her. His meaning was clear.

Her cheeks turned crimson and after one appealing glance at Terry she pretended to

examine a lace handkerchief that she was holding in her lap.

The sailor's effrontery was galling. He tried to catch Dolores's eye despite Terry's forbidding frown. It was a maddening situation for the young lover. He resented any man even looking at Dolores, yet here he was bringing her to a rendezvous of the Cocktail Route where she was the admiration of every man who saw her. Terry wanted to get up and drive his fists into the sailor's face but knew it would be wise to restrain himself. They would be called out of the booth at any moment. The man had not spoken disrespectfully. There was nothing definite enough to start a fight about and Terry did not want to be put out of the café. He had come to help, not humiliate or harm Dolores. Getting into a fist fight would only complicate matters.

When the waiter returned with three foaming mugs of beer the sailor was still trying to attract Dolores's attention and the woman was working equally hard to turn his admiring glances her way. For her part she could not see why a man wanted to look twice at a frail young thing like Dolores. Didn't men want women to please them?

And what could that innocent thing across the table know about life?

The waiter placed one beer before the woman and lined up the other two in front of the sailor.

Dolores saw a calloused hand, extending from the sleeve of a tight cuffed middie, push a mug of beer toward her. Looking up she found the sailor leaning across the table grinning into her face.

She shook her head and quickly glanced away.

"The lady doesn't care for any," interposed Terry in an effort to avoid trouble.

The sailor's earlier preference for a companion looked up from the depths of her beer mug and was not pleased with her man's shifting interest.

"Come on 'ere—can't ye be decent?" and grabbing his arm she deliberately made him spill the beer in his lap.

"Awk!" he growled uncomfortably. "What's eatin' ye?" and he slapped her on the side of her head with his big open hand.

"Say—you big stiff—cut that out!" the wench scrambled to her feet and returned the sailor's slap with an unexpected and well

aimed swing that knocked him backwards in his chair to the floor.

It was more the unexpected attack than the force of the blow that upset him. It caught him off balance and his drink sodden brain refused to direct his half paralyzed muscles. While the fall served to take his mind off Dolores for the moment, nevertheless it aroused him to a frenzied fury. With a disgusting oath he struggled to his feet and reached for his woman with outstretched hands. The fingers opened and closed with a terrifying strength. There was murder in the insane leer on his face.

Terry knew that this was no place for Dolores. For himself he didn't care. He rather enjoyed the prospect of trouble but it would have been folly for him to interfere in any way. His first thought was of her. Dolores's safety was his first consideration. Beckoning her to arise, Terry got to his feet and putting his arm protectingly about her, they backed away to the side of the room and leaned against the wall. Here they could see all that happened without being in the direct line of the fracas.

All eyes were turned upon the advancing sailor and the woman who was the object of

his wrath. She backed away from his lurching figure without the least sign of fear and picking up an empty beer bottle poised it threateningly. It was evident that she had been in similar battles before. Before anything happened to either of them, a foolish waiter grabbed the sailor's arm. It was an invitation for immediate trouble and he got it. The sailor turned on him with a snarl of rage and drove his fist into the waiter's face with a force that knocked him under a table six feet away. The blow was the spark that caused the fireworks. Other waiters jumped the sailor from all sides and he went to the floor with half a dozen of them on top of him. Several sailors rushed to their friend's assistance and soon the fight became a wild mêlée.

Dolores was horrified. She was seeing life with a real vengeance. More than she had ever dreamed of in her wildest moments. Terry watched with sparkling eyes. He longed to join in the mix-up but the trembling grasp of Dolores's fingers on his arm brought a sense of his true responsibility. He held her close to him and shielded her as much as possible from the disgusting spectacle.

From a room back of the bar the manager, returning for Dolores and Terry, gazed on the fight. The whole establishment looked as if it might be wrecked so he called upon the professional bouncers. Four big, square jawed huskies slipped into the room and arming themselves with heavy "persuaders" which the bartender gave them, waded into the swaying fighters swinging the heavy clubs at any head that was near. Friend or foe, it made no difference.

The brawl was soon over. Few heads can stand up under the tap of a heavy hickory club, especially when wielded by a brawny arm and the rioters in Lu Fong's café were no exception. The fighting ceased and sailors and waiters alike sat down and proceeded to nurse sore heads and swollen eyes.

The sailor and the woman who had started all the trouble sat down side by side and pledged their devotion anew over two mugs of beer. He grinned at her sheepishly as they toasted each other happily.

The Chinese manager came over to Dolores and Terry where they were standing by the wall and said, "Me velly solly about fight. You come now. Me take you see Lu Fong." He beckoned them out of the booth.

Dolores longed for the serene beauty of the hacienda and would have left Lu Fong's and the haunts of Frisco, never to return, if her reason for being there had been prompted by any motive other than to avenge her Grandfather's death.

Silently, with uncontrollable misgivings, they followed the manager to that mysterious door that was seldom used. It swished closed behind them. Dolores trembled nervously.

Terry took her arm reassuringly with a steady hand that belied his worry. He upbraided himself for having permitted her to come. It was no place for an exquisite young white girl and Terry recalled with a qualm of dread that it was reputed easier to get in to see Lu Fong, the head of the Inner Circle, than it was to get out.

CHAPTER XV

DOLORES AND TERRY ARE KIDNAPPED

Going down a short flight of heavily carpeted stairs, on which their feet sank into the cushion pads and made no sound, Dolores and Terry crossed a dimly lighted hallway, stuffy with oriental furnishings, to a heavily barred door. Here the manager stopped and looking at them sideways with a supercilious grin raised his yellow hand and gave a peculiar series of knocks on a small smooth panel in the door.

No sooner had his tapping code stopped than a wicket slid slowly open and a Chinaman's face appeared. He and the manager exchanged scarcely perceptible nods of understanding. The wicket closed. The manager departed up the stairs without saying a word.

Dolores and Terry were left alone.

"Terry, I am afraid!" whispered Dolores. She was trembling.

"Oh, these Chinamen always have a lot

of mystery about everything they do, but wait until they hear what we have to say—they wouldn't hurt us for the world." Terry appeared more optimistic than he felt.

The door could not open from the outside, therefore it had no knob or lock, but presently it slid into the wall so quietly that Terry and Dolores were not conscious it had opened until their attention was drawn that way by the sound of soft, pulsating music from within.

They were on the threshold of the Inner Circle.

The Chinaman whose face had appeared at the wicket bowed low and ushered them in with repeated waves of his hand.

The room was surprisingly large and gorgeously furnished in a sumptuous Oriental style. The fragrance of heavy incense filled the atmosphere and Dolores choked until she had become accustomed to the pungent odor.

A group of elaborately gowned Chinamen were seated in a semicircle with their backs to the entrance and it was apparent that they were engrossed in watching something in the room beyond.

No one paid any attention to the bewildered newcomers. It had been somewhat of

an ordeal to reach the Inner Circle and they thought it strange to be ignored after their arrival.

Curious to know the source of the strange music and to see what the Tong men were watching so intently, Dolores and Terry, of one accord, approached the semicircle of intent observers and looked into the room beyond.

After one first glance Dolores hid her face in her open palms. The color mounted to her cheeks and she stood there in amazed horror and mortification.

Terry again cursed himself for having permitted her to come. With his arm about her shoulder he led her around to one end of the semicircle where the Chinamen would be compelled to see them and where it would not be necessary to look into that room beyond.

The Chinamen continued their silent enjoyment of the show that Lu Fong had arranged for their especial enjoyment.

A beautiful white girl with long golden hair and a very scantily draped figure was posing on a small revolving platform while Chinese girls sat around on the floor and played on native stringed instruments.

Lu Fong had been informed that a young girl and man had news for him concerning Buckwell and as soon as he caught sight of them he clapped his hands. It was the signal for the curtain between the two rooms to be drawn.

Reluctantly the Tong leaders transferred their attention to Lu Fong and following his example arose. They bowed to Dolores and Terry and took their places around a massive center table.

Chinese girls came in from the room beyond and rearranged the furniture. One of them kept particularly busy in the immediate vicinity of Dolores, Terry and Lu Fong.

She was San Toy, one of Buckwell's very reliable sources of information.

"You have news for us?" inquired Lu Fong, sitting straight and calm in his high backed chair. He looked quizzically at Dolores and Terry.

"Yes," replied Terry, drawing slightly nearer with Dolores at his side. "Here is another victim of Buckwell's greed," he indicated Dolores, "but through what she has learned, he is now at your mercy."

Terry was surprised and disappointed

A Warner Bros. Production.

BUCKWELL IN THE HANDS OF HIS VICTIMS.

Old San Francisco.

that neither Lu Fong nor his six Tong leaders indicated even a flicker of interest.

"*You* tell them your story," he said, turning to Dolores.

For a moment she suffered a dreadful surge of stage fright. She wanted Terry to do the talking after all. It seemed impossible for her to forget the scene of a moment before and face the Chinamen. But a reminder of the vengeance she was about to achieve steeled her for the ordeal and facing Lu Fong and his Tong leaders she said:

"I am here to tell you that the man you call Señor Buckwell is—is a man of your own Chinese blood."

A quick hiss and loud intake of breath escaped Lu Fong as soon as Dolores had spoken. He leaned forward, watching her, with as great interest as he had ever shown in public.

The Oriental imperturbability of the others around the table was also broken. A general rustle of interest seemed to fill the room.

San Toy straightened up from her self imposed task of rearranging pillows and stood like one turned to stone. She waited for Dolores's next words with perfectly con-

trolled eagerness. Her Master's secret had been discovered—and by a girl!

"You tell us this thing—why?" questioned Lu Fong with quiet slowness.

"Because I feel that Señor Buckwell is responsible for my Grandfather's death!" Her head came up high and her voice rang out clear and strong. She was the very picture of proud truth and too young and innocent in appearance to be capable of a lie, especially a lie with such tremendous consequences as the one she had just uttered. Even the Chinamen realized this.

"Are you sure of what you say?" again questioned Lu Fong.

"I swear by my Grandfather's memory that my story is true!"

"What do you desire that we do in the matter?" The leader of the Inner Circle was thoroughly aroused.

"I want Señor Buckwell to be—punished—" Dolores was almost overcome from the emotional strain and could say no more.

"Yes!" Lu Fong bared his teeth like a tiger ready for the promised kill.

The other Chinamen were no less cruel in their expressions and anticipation of revenge.

"Let the word be spread," announced Lu Fong rising with calm assurance, "that the persecutor of our people—he who contemptuously called us 'lowly yellow scum'—is a renegade to his race and his creed."

The Tong men nodded assent and quickly withdrew to pass on word of their leader's message in various directions.

"Furthermore," continued Lu Fong, turning back to Dolores with deference, "we shall call him to account before those of the race to which he pretends—the white bosses shall be the Judges."

With the quick silent motion of a snake San Toy, unnoticed, slid out of the room from between the drawn curtain and sped on her way to tell Buckwell the arresting news.

"When will you ask Señor Buckwell to account for himself?" inquired Terry.

"Before another sun has set," promptly replied Lu Fong with decision. "We shall call on him to-morrow and disclose our information."

Dolores nodded her approval.

Lu Fong saw and for the first time indulged in a smile. It was a gentle smile of

appreciation and Dolores was not the least annoyed.

"It would give me pleasure to confer upon you a token of my thanks," said Lu Fong in a voice that indicated a niceness of which he was not generally thought capable, and turning to an ornate chest on a nearby table he selected an exquisitely handsome jade ornament on a slender silken cord. "Accept it, please, as a token of my gratitude," and bowing low he offered it to Dolores.

She admired the beautiful ornament and instinctively reached for it but drew back and shook her head when she saw his long, slightly curled finger nails.

Terry noticed her hesitancy and nudging her on the elbow indicated that she had better take it. Lu Fong's head was still bowed and fortunately he did not notice.

"Thank you, it is lovely," said Dolores. She extended her hand gingerly to be sure that she would not touch the Chinaman, but to her surprise he appeared not to notice and stepping closer slipped the silken cord over her head.

As far as Lu Fong was concerned the incident was over. Clapping his hands three times in quick succession he stood like a

statue and waited until a native servant appeared.

"Show my friends," he instructed significantly, "above to the street and see that no harm befalls them."

And then before Dolores and Terry knew what was happening they were bowed from the room. The guide led them through a strange tunnel-like passage which eventually brought them into a Chinese Curio shop.

The keeper was there alone working busily at nothing. He and the guide exchanged brief nods and jointly opened the double doors to permit their master's friends to pass out unmolested.

Terry and Dolores thankfully breathed the fresh night air and looked about to get their bearings.

They were on Du Pont Street, a short ways below the Café they had entered earlier in the evening.

Grateful that the ordeal was so satisfactorily over they hurried along the sidewalk toward Terry's waiting carriage.

"Terry, I never want to come to any of these places again," said Dolores vehemently.

"And you never will—I have had my lesson at bringing you out—this is the last time," and sighing gratefully that it was all over without mishap, he helped her into the carriage.

"The Vasquez hacienda," Terry said to the sleepy driver, and settled back to enjoy the moonlight drive home with Dolores.

But no sooner had they passed the bright lights of that particular section than Chris Buckwell stepped from the shadows with Jimmie on one side and the Texas Kid, a notorious gangster, on the other.

"There they are," nodded Buckwell, as the carriage drove past, "get busy—you know your orders."

As soon as Buckwell gave the word his henchmen rushed out in the street and swung on the carriage steps—one on either side. Quicker than it takes to tell about it, Jimmie stuffed a gag in Dolores's mouth and the Texas Kid subjected Terry to the same treatment, in addition to snapping a pair of bracelets on his wrists. Deprived of hands and voice Terry used his feet to great advantage in the pit of the Texas Kid's stomach. The bottom of the carriage was a scrambled mass of men until Jimmie

snapped another pair of handcuffs around his victim's ankles. Terry was powerless.

He and Dolores looked into each other's eyes. A world of love and agonized misgivings flashed from one to the other.

Terry cursed himself again and again for having brought Dolores. He shuddered at what was probably in store for her.

"Can the soft looks," commented Jimmie, "Say, Pete," he continued, reaching up and poking the driver in the back, "The gang's all here—let's go home!"

"Sure we'll get there—these horses ain't half bad," and the driver turned around to show his grinning face to the surprised young man and woman in the back.

He was not the man Terry had originally engaged!

Chris Buckwell sauntered out from his shadow and stopped to light a cigar. He was well satisfied. His plans had been made and executed within half an hour after San Toy rushed to him with her report. A cruel light gleamed in his eyes as he realized that those who were trying to destroy him were now in his power.

CHAPTER XVI

DOLORES'S HONOR OR TERRY'S LIFE

JIMMIE and the Texas Kid derived considerable sport from watching their bound and gagged prisoners during that enforced drive in the carriage they had confiscated from Terry.

They kept up a constant stream of slang that Dolores could only partially understand. Terry listened intently. He wanted to gain an inkling of why and by whom they had been captured. It was evident that the thugs who attacked them in the street were merely acting as tools for some master mind.

"That's the biggest mouthful ye ever had in them pretty lips," said Jimmie, rearranging Dolores's gag so she would neither choke nor speak.

Her eyes opened wide and flared in anger then, as she realized the hopelessness of the situation, she closed them tightly. Tears forced their way through the long lashes and rolled down her cheeks. She did not open

them again until the sound of Terry's voice made her look at him in surprise.

His gag was being tied on more securely but a quick twist of his head afforded momentary freedom and regardless of the fact that Dolores could hear, he cursed his captors with a vehemence that aroused their admiration.

"What are you —— —— doing with us?" Terry managed to get out before he was securely silenced again.

"Ha, ha," chortled Jimmie.

The Texas Kid joined in, "That's a good 'un—but as the dame 'ere would say, it's a secret!" and again they laughed uproariously.

For such an incident to take place on the streets without interference from the police did not speak well for San Francisco. But it was proven later that the police were under the jurisdiction of just such bosses as Buckwell. They knew better than to interfere with affairs that would probably bring the ill will of local politicians and mean the loss of their jobs.

Taking out two large squares of silk, Jimmie and the Texas Kid proceeded to roll them into long bandages.

"It's a shame to cover them pretty eyes," commented Jimmie, "but orders is orders, and we've most come to where we're goin'."

Without further ado Dolores was blindfolded. Immediately she was conscious of a great disturbance in the carriage.

Terry was strenuously objecting to the additional punishment. He lashed around with his body, twisting and thumping against the Texas Kid with his shoulders.

"Cut it—cut it!" said Jimmie nursing a painful bruise that Terry had inflicted on his face with a blow from handcuffed fists.

Terry's struggles only increased. "All right then, maybe this'll calm yer," and Jimmie tapped him on the head with a pocket billy.

Dolores could not see but the dull thud told her something had happened to Terry. She was frantic with worry.

"Dat 'ill hold 'im fer awhile. De girl's de goods de boss wants, anyhow," observed the Texas Kid.

Dolores heard and her anxiety was increased. She could not even reach Terry. She sobbed inwardly as she wondered what was going to become of them if Terry was badly hurt.

Presently she was conscious of the carriage stopping and thought it strange that not a word was spoken by either of the thugs or the driver. She sobbed anew when she could tell from the sounds that two of the men were *carrying* Terry. "He can't walk! Is he dead? What will they do with him?" she wondered.

In absolute silence, she was guided by the arm through a narrow doorway, she could tell it was narrow because she felt her long skirts swish against the sides as she was pushed through. She and her guide stopped for several minutes and when they continued she could not hear any sounds of Terry and the men who were carrying him. Apparently they had gone by a different way. With her heart almost bursting from worry and fear, Dolores stumbled along. She could neither see, speak nor use her hands and it was terrifying to go up and down stairways, along narrow halls and stand in the mysterious blackness with bandaged eyes to wait while doors were opened in response to her guide's weird tappings.

Dolores did not know that she was in the underground passages leading to Chris Buckwell's home. After what seemed to

her an eternity she found that they were walking on heavily carpeted floors and up a long flight of carpeted stairs.

"Here ye are," commented the Texas Kid untying her bandage, "*some* diggings, ain't they?" he observed as Dolores looked about her in fear and surprise.

It was an oriental bed chamber of elaborate and terrifying design. There were heavily embroidered silk window draperies. The walls were hand painted with dragons. The floor highly waxed with many handsome Chinese rugs scattered about. Lights on the side walls and ceiling gleamed from the mouths and eyes of great metal dragons. The furniture was black ebony and red lacquer. It was handsome but suitable only for exhibition purposes. Dolores felt more alone and frightened than ever. She knew that she was in the home of a Chinaman and her blood turned cold with dread.

"I'll take de bracelets wid me," observed the Kid, suiting action to words; then he continued, "If ye want somethin' de boss says ye're to ring de bell," and without even a backward glance he went out and closed the door.

Dolores's heart sank when she heard the

key turned and withdrawn. Rushing to a window she pushed aside the draperies and found the blank wall. The curtains were hung merely for effect, there was not a window in the room! An elaborate prison room that was suffocating her with its oriental splendor. She was so tired and overwrought that her thoughts were beyond control. They were running rampant and all she could do was pace the floor in mental torment. The chairs and bed were so typically Chinese and ornate that she refused to go near them. Finally in utter exhaustion she sat on the floor and, cradling her knees in her arms as she often did at the rancho, dozed off into fitful sleep. She dreamed that Terry was dead and Buckwell, Lu Fong and the sailor were chasing her through terrifying underground passages of Chinatown.

Dolores had no way of knowing the time when she was aroused from her cramped position on the floor by a noise in the room. Looking up she saw a beautiful Chinese girl placing a tray on a nearby table and watching her all the while with a very curious and intent scrutiny.

San Toy wanted to compare her own

beauty with that of the white girl in whom her Master was so interested.

The two girls looked at each other in silence until San Toy backed from the room and locked the door on the outside. If daggers had pricked her heart San Toy could not have been more miserable. She was forced to admit that Dolores was the most beautiful creature she had ever seen.

Dolores refreshed herself and surveyed the tray with hungry misgivings. It looked more like luncheon than breakfast and her appetite told her that it must be the case. But she was afraid to eat, the food might be poisoned or drugged. However, she could not resist some little cakes with blanched almonds in the center that looked too delicious to be harmful.

It happened that just as Dolores decided she could not endure the suspense another moment her door opened and San Toy stood framed in the doorway.

"You come with me," she said with a charming accent that surprised Dolores.

"Where?"

"It not matter—you come, now!"

Dolores followed down a handsome stair-

case and across a wide hall. No one was visible. She was amazed to note that a great wall clock was striking the hour of three, and sunlight streamed through the window. It was afternoon.

In a little library at the end of the hall she was startled to meet Jimmie and the Texas Kid, apparently waiting for her. She drew back with a frightened "Oh!" Immediately Jimmie held her hands and The Kid tied the same silk handkerchief around her eyes that she had endured for so long the night before. But the Kid was careless. Dolores could see clearly beneath the bandage. Trembling with excitement she stealthily watched where they were going. With no idea what was in store for her, Dolores suffered herself to be guided to a secret opening and down a winding flight of stairs. From beneath the bandage she watched Jimmie open another large door. They entered a room. That was all Dolores could see of the journey. Without warning the blindfolder was slipped from her head. She looked up.

Chris Buckwell smiled at her calmly from his comfortable chair in the center of the room.

"You had me brought here?" she questioned, the truth beginning to dawn. Her head went up defiantly. "Where is Señor O'Shaughnessy?"

"We will not talk of him!" observed Buckwell with curt finality. His eyes, that had been scrutinizing her so absorbingly, noticed the exquisite jade piece presented by Lu Fong. It made a gorgeous big blotch of green against Dolores's black gown. Buckwell drew in his breath sharply. "There is only one man in Frisco who has jade like that—Lu Fong—the damnable trouble maker!" His eyes narrowed angrily and rising quickly he snatched it from Dolores's neck and tossed it contemptuously to Jimmie and the Texas Kid who stood dutifully in the background waiting for their chief's next orders.

They examined the exquisitely carved stone, snapped it in two and each took half. The jade recarved, together with the bag of gold Buckwell had given them to divide made their night's profits good pickings. They were more than satisfied.

Turning back to Dolores with a suave smile Buckwell indicated the floor overhead, "In the chamber above," he said, "wait

those to whom you told a certain story last night."

Dolores's eyes lighted up with hope; she felt that if Lu Fong had come to capture Buckwell there would be a chance for her deliverance and an opportunity to find out about Terry.

Noting her suppressed excitement Buckwell continued, "It won't do you any good! You are now about to find it your duty to tell these same yellow gentlemen that your accusations regarding me were false."

Buckwell paused for effect, but it was not necessary. Dolores was aghast at his audacity. Nevertheless, an unconscious sigh escaped her lips. It was a relief to know why she had been kidnapped and if Buckwell wanted her to again face the Tong men he would probably require Terry's presence, too, which meant they had not killed him.

Dolores smiled nervously; it was the only vent she dared give her relief. But her thoughts were absorbed in trying to devise some plan to elude Buckwell's hypnotic eye and get out of his underground den. She was fully determined not to play into his hand by lying. The whole purpose of the trip that had developed into a series of

hideous experiences, was to wreak vengeance upon Buckwell, not to do favors for him.

"When you are brought in to face the Tong leaders," continued Buckwell, glaring at her menacingly, "I want you to swear that your statement about me was merely the delusion of a grief stricken brain."

Dolores returned Buckwell's gaze in silent, contemptuous defiance.

"Is that clear?" he asked loudly. "You understand what you are to do?"

Buckwell was accustomed to being obeyed and Dolores was not accustomed to such rude insistence. It was a bad combination.

"I will not say that!" her determined voice gave no indication of the fear that engulfed her. Her beautiful young lips were curled in scorn.

"You are proud, aren't you?" taunted Buckwell with a forced laugh. "Why are you Spanish Vasquezes superior to the rest of us? Bah!" he answered himself as Dolores stood erect with angry eyes flashing dangerously. "You're no better than I am, except that your noble family faces death bravely. We will see if you are as fine and courageous as you think." He stood before her and said slowly, "There is —— some-

thing you will not face so coldly!"

Afraid of being touched, Dolores retreated to the other side of a large chair and watched Buckwell with eyes of terror.

Turning quickly to Jimmie and the Texas Kid he said, "Bring him in!"

As they disappeared behind a large manifold screen a blood curdling yell filled the room. Dolores screamed aloud in terror and her heart almost stopped beating.

It was the dwarf. He had been listening intently to every word and yelled out in wild excitement to make Dolores look in his direction.

She did, and recoiled in panic at the sight of his hideous face and twisted body leering at her from the barred cage in the wall.

"Shut up!" said Buckwell in a stern voice, hurling a book in his direction.

It fell on the floor, but that did not matter, it had served to silence the dwarf. However, he continued to listen and watch, not missing anything that transpired in the shrine room. His powers of observation were keen and he knew more about his renegade brother's affairs and the workings of the underground doors than the latter imagined.

The scuffling of feet drew Dolores's attention to the other side of the room. Not knowing what to expect but hoping against hope it was the men returning with Terry, she whirled about.

"Terry!" she cried with a mingling of relief and love, and rushed toward him impulsively.

"Stay where you are, my proud, brave girl," said Buckwell, grasping her wrist in a vise like grip that hurt and infuriated her.

It would do Dolores no good to speak and Terry was incapable of utterance. Still bound and gagged he looked at her with a world of questions, misgivings and love in his pain-filled eyes. His mouth was bleeding. There was a cruel gash on his forehead that had not had attention. His clothes were dusty, bloody and mussed. Her heart went out to him in compassion. She thanked God that he was alive and longed to do something to relieve his suffering.

Buckwell seemed to derive a cruel satisfaction from watching the young lovers' anguish. It was his revenge for the thrashing Terry had given him at the Crystal Palace, but his merciless brain suddenly decided the

score was not yet even and he gave a quiet order to Jimmie, then drew back and watched Dolores.

The man threw Terry on his face. Jimmie took his neck, the Texas Kid grasped his feet and they began bending him backward with brutal steadiness.

Terry's face turned livid red and moist from the pain.

The dwarf screamed and rattled the bars of his prison.

"Stop! Stop! Oh, don't!" cried Dolores in anguish and rushing to Terry threw herself on the floor beside him, and tried to touch his face with loving hands.

"Let him go!" she screamed, and in reaching up tried to push Jimmie away. She even clawed frantically at his hands, but he paid no attention to her entreaties and continued the slow pull backward that was almost tearing Terry's muscles from bones that could not stand much more strain.

"Make them stop!" entreated Dolores, appealing to Buckwell with tear-filled eyes.

"So—you *are* afraid of death, aren't you?" commented Buckwell with a calm smile.

"Oh, you—you cruel beast!" sobbed Do-

lores. "Please, please make them stop—They'll kill him!"

"That will do." Buckwell raised his voice and motioned his men to desist.

They released Terry and he writhed on the floor in agony.

"Well?" inquired Buckwell, threateningly of Dolores, "will you tell the Tong men above what I wish, or shall we continue to prepare your young man for his grave?"

"Oh!" Dolores groaned in mental torment and pressed icy cold fingers against her throbbing temples. She knew that if she obeyed Buckwell by lying to the Tong leaders, Terry would be safe; but her Grandfather's death would be unavenged. She was the last of the Vasquez's and had taken a sacred oath beside her Grandfather's dead body to uphold the honor of their name. She could not do it by lying. While on the other hand she could not endure being responsible for Terry's murder. She loved him and he was all she had in the world.

"Oh, dear God—dear God," she prayed, "What shall I do?"

CHAPTER XVII

THE LIE

The sensational scandal of Buckwell's deception spread like wildfire. By dawn the Tong leaders of Chinatown, headed by Lu Fong, had demanded a showdown and the white bosses had acceded to their demand.

Unfortunately they could not all arrange to meet at Buckwell's until three o'clock in the afternoon but from early morning a crowd began gathering about the entrance to the home of the so-called Czar. They anticipated something startling and did not want to miss a chance to see anything that might transpire on the street.

For the most part the curiosity seekers were white. But there were several groups of Chinamen on the outskirts. They all knew Buckwell, and had either envied him his political notoriety or felt the uncomfortable influence of his power in their own insignificant lives. The amazing news, of his having concealed his Chinese origin without

anyone's suspicions being aroused, awakened their interest as nothing else could have done. When their long vigil was rewarded with the arrival of the yellow and white bosses in a body, shortly before three o'clock, they surged about the entrance in a frenzy of excitement.

The door of Buckwell's home was opened by a respectful, white man servant whose presence would have added dignity to the Governor's mansion. There was enough about him to indicate an English background that would not have tolerated working for a Chinaman had he known it; which was another indication of Buckwell's great power over himself as well as over others.

The delegation that had come to hear Buckwell refute the accusation against him was ushered into the big main living room and asked to make themselves comfortable.

The servant withdrew and closed the door.

Lu Fong and the Tong leaders huddled together in a group. Opposite them were the white bosses and a few others, including Brandon, who had a big personal interest in anything that concerned Buckwell's possible downfall. As they faced each other, waiting for the man who had dictated to all of them

for so long there was a tense air of anticipation.

They had been a little surprised that Buckwell had agreed so readily to the appointment. Although they had not mentioned the reason for their desired visit they had no doubt but that he was well informed of its purpose. He always knew about everything while it was still news. Just what his wonderful source of information was, they could never ascertain. His secret passage leading to Chinatown, and other entrances to the upper world, were well guarded secrets. Buckwell's few confidants knew that their lives would be forfeited if they squealed.

A clock in the hall announced the hour of three. Buckwell had not put in an appearance. Signs of restless anxiety became evident. If the hall door had been opened at that very moment they could have seen the girl who supplied the information being guided down the stairs on her way to Buckwell's secret shrine. And they would have marvelled anew at his cruel plans for defense. But they did not suspect what was going on. While the hands of the clock crept slowly around the dial the Chinamen sat in

apparently calm silence. The white men talked with each other or chewed expensive cigars in annoyance. They agreed that if Buckwell failed to face them, his absence would be sufficient proof of their charge, but they preferred the satisfaction of dealing with him personally.

The arrival of Buckwell's callers had been announced to him in the shrine beneath his home and he became impatient with Dolores for her indecision. Punctuality was one of Buckwell's strong points and in this case he particularly desired to be prompt. He did not want his suspicious callers to have leisure for further speculation or suspect him of preparing for their arrival.

With contempt that was tinged with awe he eyed Dolores as she prayed for help.

"Come, come," he broke in impatiently, "that stuff won't help you. Either be prepared to tell the gentlemen upstairs that you lied or watch your young lover here have his neck broken. Which shall it be?"

Dolores looked at Buckwell incredulously but there was no doubt about his seriousness. She turned toward Terry and her heart throbbed in agony for him. He had suffered enough on her account. She had

no right to cause his death—her Grandfather would not want that and neither did she. If Buckwell had asked for her own life it would have been different but she could not sacrifice another's who had become involved in her affairs through love and generosity.

With teeth and hands tightly clenched Dolores looked Buckwell squarely in the eyes and said, "I will tell them." No sooner were the words out than she suffered a surge of weakness that almost overpowered her.

"Good!" exclaimed Buckwell, rubbing his hands together as if congratulating himself on the cowardly victory. He was now sure of the verbal battle soon to be waged upstairs. As a precaution he dropped his expansive smile and turned to Dolores again. "Watch carefully and see what will happen if you forget the part you are to play."

Turning quickly as if the delay of a single moment meant death, Buckwell spoke sharply and in haste. "Come on men," motioning to Jimmie and the Texas Kid. "Hang him up here." And opening an enormous lacquered cabinet he indicated the empty interior. It had been rigged for just such a purpose. Leather straps, riveted to

the back, fastened around Terry's neck, others secured his waist, knees and ankles. His feet were a few inches from the bottom, so that the weight of his body became painfully unbearable as the minutes increased.

"If these doors should be closed," explained Buckwell, "our young friend here would suffocate." And watching Dolores from the corner of his eyes he suited the action to the words.

"No! No!" she screamed, running forward and pushing open the doors. "I told you I would lie to them!" Turning her back on Buckwell she faced Terry as he hung in the cabinet. "Oh, Terry, dear," she cried, reaching up to touch him with loving hands, "I am so sorry you have to suffer—it will soon be over!" and she smiled encouragingly.

He could not speak but his tired, agonized eyes looked into hers and said many things that she understood.

"Oh!" Dolores whirled toward Buckwell possessed with a new idea. "As soon as I lie to them will you promise to release him?"

"I am pleased to see that you care for him so deeply. It means that you will not fail me. . . . Yes—I promise!" and Buckwell

laughed loud at the sound of the childish expression from his own lips. "San Toy!" he called. Immediately she appeared from behind the big screen and eagerly approached her master. "It shall be your sacred duty," continued Buckwell, giving her starved heart his undivided attention for a brief moment, "to guard this prisoner and watch my signal light from the room above. If the light goes out it means that his life passes with it—understand?"

San Toy's small hand came from her waist and in its strong clasp was a long, sharp dagger. She held it above her shoulder in deadly position and eyed Buckwell inquiringly.

He nodded in grim assent and knew that San Toy would not fail him. She never had, and he had given her many difficult orders.

Dolores groaned inwardly as she and Terry looked at each other across the intervening space so filled with treachery. Messages of love, hope and encouragement flashed between them.

"You will return to your room," broke in Buckwell, "and come down when I send for you. I want you to act the part you are to play, as well as to speak it. Remember if

you go back on your word that light goes out —I will have my finger on the switch from the moment you enter the room—and as soon as it goes out your young friend will be red from his own blood. Understand?"

"Yes, I understand." Her shudder of terror was almost a chill.

"All right, men," ordered Buckwell. "Cover her eyes and take her back."

While Dolores was again being conducted through secret openings and passageways up to the Chinese bed chamber, Buckwell followed along to the hall entrance of the living room where his assembled enemies were impatiently waiting his arrival.

Opening the door he felt the tenseness of the atmosphere but chose to ignore it. "I am sorry to have kept you waiting," he apologized, removing a hat that he had picked up from the hall table. "I was unexpectedly detained at a conference a few blocks away." He smiled at them with calm self-assurance.

There was a long pause. Some of the men believed him, others did not; but there was no doubt about their all marvelling at his iron nerve.

Lu Fong advanced from the little group

of Tong leaders and approached the man of questionable origin with intent determination. Before he could speak Buckwell gained an opening advantage by forcing his accusers to do the explaining.

"I have heard the ridiculous charges that our yellow friend here has made," he said to the rest of the men in the room, "and I shall be interested to learn on what he could possibly base his charge."

Buckwell's manner indicated a polite and justifiable resentment. He would not even condescend to address the Chinaman who had spread the bad news. As he finished speaking he looked around the room at the white bosses with a smile of tolerant amusement. They sighed with relief. They had many big deals pending with Buckwell and it would be disastrous to have him out of things until affairs had progressed a bit farther.

Buckwell finally looked Lu Fong in the eye with a deadly glare and said, "Well?"

All eyes turned upon the Tong leader. He did not waver. His moment had come. With a slight smile and air of absolute assurance he respectfully confronted the white bosses.

"My charges rest upon the word of a lady," he explained, "a lady of a most ancient and honorable name. She swore by the sacred memory of her Grandfather who died as a result of the doubtful one's persecution." Lu Fong paused and turned small, accusing eyes on Buckwell.

Every man in the room shifted his attention to Buckwell. They searched for some sign of the alien race but could not be sure of detecting it. His powerful physique had been an invaluable asset for the successful masquerade.

Buckwell appeared to enjoy their scrutiny. He remained as calm and collected as before and again stole Lu Fong's thunder by asking, "I presume that you are speaking of the Señorita Dolores de Vasquez?"

Lu Fong nodded assent and his manifestation of surprise was a compliment to Buckwell's uncanny knowledge of the subject. The nod served to broaden the accused man's smile and with an air of triumph he turned to the onlookers.

"My dear friends—you see how foolish it is!" he exclaimed with an exaggerated showoff air. "The lady in question chances to be a guest in my home even now. I am sure

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DOLORES AT THE MERCY OF THE YELLOW MEN.

she will not mind if I call her before you and disabuse your minds of any possible credence in what this malicious Chink has said."

The white men nodded and smiled. They were relieved at Buckwell's evident ability to disprove the story which would eventually react to their disadvantage as well.

Utterly ignoring the Chinamen, Buckwell summoned a servant and requested him to ask the young lady in the room at the head of the stairs to come down.

Surprised at the bewildering turn the situation had taken, the Tong men became uneasy and a bit worried. Lu Fong was so thoroughly convinced of the truth of Dolores's story as she related it in his den the night before that he did not expect the same girl to appear. He thought that he had sensed her intense hatred of Buckwell and was at a loss to understand how she would consent to remain as a guest in his home. Lu Fong was sure there was some mistake.

With a desire to give his callers a vivid impression of Dolores as a delightful part of the household, Buckwell opened the hall doors just in time to let them see her descending the staircase.

Lu Fong's speechless surprise began turning into irate fury. He had been duped and that is something a Chinaman will not endure.

Dolores entered the room and stood beside Buckwell with an obedient effort to be casual. In reality she was tense and cold with fear. She wanted the ordeal to be over without delay so that Terry could enjoy freedom and relief from torture. Her proud, exquisite head was held high and her eyes never left Buckwell's figure. She did not trust him and watched carefully to see that he, also, kept his word.

Bowing courteously before Dolores Buckwell stepped back and significantly rested his hand on an ornate statue base. She looked closely and saw a white electric push button cleverly worked into the design. Buckwell glanced at it meaningly and Dolores understood the look.

Turning to the eagerly waiting group and then back to Dolores he said in explanation, "It seems that there is a rumor that you have made grave accusations against me—I have asked you here to face the men to whom such a charge is of grave purport. I ask you now in their presence, to truthfully affrm or deny those accusations."

He waited calmly for Dolores to speak.

The stillness in the room was intense. Each man scarcely breathed as each leaned forward in eager anticipation of what she would say. A minute passed. And another. Still Dolores did not speak. Lu Fong and the Tong men waited patiently with an air of confidence. Buckwell's hand played nervously around the push button.

Dolores watched the fingers in fascination. She knew that the slightest pressure of one of them on the button even accidentally meant death for the one she loved. But she also thought of her Grandfather, and dimly before her eyes she could see the great Vasquez sword with its motto, "A Vasquez Avenges A Vasquez." And she thought of her vow to avenge. But clearer than the vision and even stronger than her vow was her remembrance of the suffering on the face of the man she loved, who had risked his very life for—her. With a quick glance at the waiting audience she confronted Buckwell, but her gaze was riveted upon his hand, not his face, as she said obediently.

"I have made no accusations against you to anyone!"

CHAPTER XVIII

HOURS OF PERIL

No greater smile of satisfaction ever suffused a man's face than spread over the well controlled features of Chris Buckwell when Dolores spoke the few words that turned Lu Fong's accusation into a lie.

"There you are!" exclaimed Buckwell triumphantly. "I am afraid, Lu Fong," he continued, "That your hatred of me has, at last, carried you too far."

The listeners knew that since Buckwell compelled Lu Fong to relinquish all property rights in Frisco, the Chinaman was against him. But his plan for revenge had apparently been more daring than successful.

Before Lu Fong could reply the white bosses returned Buckwell's smile with relief and nods of approval. As they crowded around to extend congratulations on his vindication, Buckwell swaggered forward and offered his hand.

The tong men stared into space, or whispered to each other. They were unable to believe their ears.

Lu Fong approached Dolores with a deadly, threatening look in his eyes. But she had even forgotten that he was in the room. As soon as Buckwell left the light button to revel in the plaudits of his associates, Dolores swiftly protected the fatal switch with her own hand and electrified every man in the room by crying out:

"Hold Señor Buckwell! He is a Chinaman!"

Buckwell whirled with both arms outstretched and, pushing aside the men who surrounded him, made for Dolores.

"Don't let him touch me!" she warned in terror, her hand covering the switch protectingly.

Buckwell was seized by strong hands on all sides. His struggles were futile, yet he retained a fine air of injured dignity. "The girl is demented. Let me have her taken to her room," he said.

But for once no one believed Chris Buckwell. He found that his political contemporaries were holding him prisoner in his own home.

"That is not true—I am perfectly sane," defended Dolores, her eyes shining and her cheeks red with excitement. "He made me lie to you. He said that if I told the truth again he would press this light switch," she pointed to it as if it were a poisonous scorpion, "which would be the signal for Terrance O'Shaughnessy's death." Her eyes sought Brandon and she continued, "Terry is bound and gagged down stairs, in a torture chamber."

Every white and yellow man in the room knew that Dolores had told the truth. Buckwell glared at her with murder in his eyes but was prevented from reaching her, or the switch, by the restraining hands of the men who had him safely pinioned in a big chair.

Every Chinaman smiled broadly in unrestrained satisfaction, disclosing shiny white teeth. Lu Fong's very expression asked Dolores' pardon for having doubted her. But of all those present Brandon was the most violently affected.

"You—damn scoundrel, where is that boy of mine?" he demanded.

It is a strange trait of human nature to protect one's kin in dire extremity, no mat-

ter how indifferent one may have been to them when things were running along smoothly. Brandon was not an exception to the rule.

Buckwell calmly returned Brandon's glare. "Find him!" he hissed. It was a challenge.

A dead silence followed the announcement.

"He is in a secret room." Dolores hastened to explain. "I was blindfolded when they took me there, but I could see beneath the bandage—there is a secret door in here."

Her voice trailed back to the men in the living room, for she had thrown open the hall doors and was on her way to that room at the end of the hall where San Toy had delivered her to Jimmie and the Texas Kid.

The tong leaders followed close behind. They wanted all the evidence of Buckwell's perfidy that could be secured and surmised that a secret room would be an excellent place to gather evidence against him.

For the first time during the interview, Buckwell lost his self possession. He cursed Dolores with a vehemence that was worse than anything the white bosses had ever heard, and even they were not unskilled in

an irreverent use of English. Overpowered by the combined strength of his captors, Buckwell was unable to resist. With a poor grace he suffered himself to be conducted to one of the two secret entrances that lead to his shrine room. It was well for the future of Jimmey and the Texas Kid that Buckwell was not able to lay his hands on them for their negligence in permitting Dolores to gain a knowledge of her surroundings.

"Here it is!" she cried happily when her hands found the same spring in the woodwork that Jimmey had pressed to open the hidden entrance.

A dark foreboding interior opened up before the astonished men gathered behind Dolores. But without hesitancy she lead them down the mysterious stairway and called out a warning when they reached the great iron door that blocked their progress. The fifty foot passage was dotted with men who still held Buckwell prisoner.

Dolores' small white hands fluttered searchingly over the surface and lingered around the heavy hinges.

"I can't open it," she cried in alarm. "I can't find the spring."

Many other hands, both yellow and white,

came to her assistance and exploringly covered every inch of the door's surface, searching for the secret spring that would give them entrance. They could not locate it.

"The men who brought me down touched something on this side—about here," explained Dolores as she reached up and pressed against the big metal hinge.

Immediately more matches flared in the darkness, but eager fingers searched in vain.

"How do you open this fool door?" demanded Brandon of Buckwell.

The designer of the secret contrivance shrugged. He was enjoying a growing sense of security. He was confident that Dolores and the men would never discover the opening spring. The door above closed automatically and was locked behind them. They were prisoners in the passageway. He would never lead them to the surface again until he had their written assurance that they would not proceed any further against him. The surmise of Dolores was in itself insufficient proof to convict him, but if they once reached the shrine room there would be ample evidence. As the minutes passed and the door still defied their efforts Buck-

well became more confident and self-assured.

"I regret that my guests must be so crowded," he commented with sneering politeness. "But remember, you are here from your own choice, and right here you will all stay until I have your promise that the matter we recently discussed upstairs shall be forgotten."

It quickly dawned on the waiting group in the secret pasageway that they had placed themselves again in Buckwell's power. Their anxiety to reach Terry had been the reason, and now they were separated from him, they were sure, only by the trick door which refused to open to their many attempts.

"They opened it right here. I know they did," insisted Dolores working untiringly to locate the hidden spring.

The flickering light of the matches revealed many tense faces, but it was the tenseness of anxiety rather than fear. Anxiety for Terry. Buckwell's face beamed with silent enjoyment. He was pleased that his accusers had played so conveniently into his hand.

"Something clicked!" cried Dolores.

They stood silent while the heavy door mysteriously opened. Buckwell cursed and franctically attempted to break away, but his captors cursed back at him jeering with scorn as his face, suddenly turned pallid from fear.

The handsomely appointed shrine room was revealed to their curious eyes. The secret of Buckwell was a secret no longer.

San Toy sprang up in alarm from her watchful position in front of Terry and the signal light that meant his death. She stood with upraised dagger, ready to thrust the weapon into the body of the first man who approached her prisoner. Brandon stooped quickly and seizing the edge of the rug upon which San Toy stood, he gave a quick jerk, and the faithful San Toy was spilled ignominiously on her back. Her tragic stand had been useless. She was deprived of the keen blade before she even knew what had happened to her, but her captors made the mistake of deeming her harmless now that her sting had been removed.

In her own way San Toy was even more dangerous than Buckwell and her brain worked faster. With a swift movement she pushed the heavy cabinet doors together.

But before they had closed on Terry with suffocating death, Dolores screamed in alarm and rushing forward pulled them wide apart.

"Terry, dear! Terry!" she sobbed, "You are safe!"

Brandon added his strong hands to Dolores' efforts to unfasten the cruel, tight straps. And in a few moments they lifted Terry from his painful position and placed him gently on the floor.

"Oh! my dear, they have hurt you so," soothed Dolores on her knees beside him trying to wipe away the dried blood with her own dainty handkerchief.

"Are *you* all right?" Terry asked anxiously. They were the first words he had been able to utter for many hours.

"Yes, dear!" she replied and bending over she kissed him gently and unashamed.

"Then *everything* is all right." He smiled his former winning smile and ignored his own aching body. Dolores helped him rise. He stretched, painfully, as the blood began flowing through his numbed limbs.

In the meantime the tong men had been looking around the room. Buckwell and

San Toy exchanged significant glances. They had their minds centered on escape and were biding an opportune time to leave the room. Ignorant of the scheming minds, working so cleverly while they were inspecting the room, Buckwell's political contemporaries discovered his Chinese shrine and threw back the handsome draperies. The fat Buddha so rudely exposed to view, appeared garrish and critical. Buckwell shuddered.

The dwarf peered from his cage, silent and weak from excitement. The room had never before been so filled with people. Suddenly realizing what it was all about the Dwarf drew everyone's attention his way by uttering a hideous laugh.

"Behold!" he shouted, extending a scrawny hand at Buckwell. "Behold my illustrious brother as he stands paralyzed with fear!"

Buckwell's face was hideous with fury. It was unquestionably Chinese. He no longer had any hope of concealing his nationality. The hated dwarf brother had completely unmasked him.

Lu Fong's eyes were alight with triumph and satisfaction.

"That settles it, Buckwell," said one of the white bosses who were holding him, "There is no doubt about your origin now."

Brought to bay, Buckwell whirled and struggled.

Suddenly every light in the room was extinguished and the surprised and frightened people groped about in black, black darkness.

San Toy had jammed a knife in the light switch.

Taken unaware the men released their hold on Buckwell for only a brief moment, but he seized the opportunity to elude them.

Pandemonium reigned in the underground room. There was wild darting back and forth, shouting, and the men who had held Buckwell groped blindly in an effort to hold him again.

It was the dwarf's guiding voice who directed the way to another light. It illuminated the room sufficiently to disclose the fact that Buckwell, Dolores and San Toy had made a complete and mysterious disappearance.

Terry was in a mad frenzy of despair. They literally tore the room apart, yet no trace of the missing ones could be found.

"Let me out! Let me out!" shouted the dwarf, "I know where they have gone—I'll show the illustrious ones!"

Without delay the bolt on his cage was slid open, the door dropped down and Buckwell's unfortunate brother jumped to the floor in a wild ecstacy of delight. Darting from one costly object to another he hurled priceless vases and rare books to the floor, intent upon destroying the things his selfish brother had prized. His scrawny arms with their uncanny strength pulled costly hangings from the walls and with each new bit of destruction he raised his hideous Chinese face and laughed raucously.

The men watched the wild orgy in amazement.

But every moment took Dolores farther and farther away and unable to stand the strain a moment longer, Terry grasped the Dwarf by the back of his soiled collar.

"Where did they go?" he demanded, "Hurry up—tell us."

"I know! I know!" came in gleeful chuckles, "Come, I'll show you." And with long arms swinging almost to the floor he ambled to the entrance of the secret passageway that the tong men and white bosses had

used a short while before. Examining the door carefully the Dwarf shook his head. "My illustrious brother was wise. He did not go up stairs—but I will make the door stay open so the honorable gentlemen who have helped me gain my freedom can find their way out. As long as this door remains open the one above will stay unlocked. You are free to depart when the mood seizes you."

There were several audible sighs of relief and a half dozen men took advantage of the opportunity to return to the upper world.

"But where did they go—you have not shown us," insisted Terry impatiently.

"I will, I will." And waddling to another part of the room he rubbed his big hands around the wall, in circular motion, and down to the floor. Suddenly he leaped up in the air and shouted. In his right hand was a torn bit of ruffle from Dolores' black gown. It had caught in the secret opening as she was hastily pushed out.

The men who had remained gathered around the Dwarf as he manipulated a secret bit of scroll work, in the same fashion he had so often seen his brother employ. A black mouth, leading to the hungry

jaws of the underworld opened before them.

"I am going to follow," announced Terry.

"I know nothing could stop you," said Brandon grasping his nephew's hand for a brief moment. "But be careful, boy, it's risky. Come to my office as soon as you can—I want to see you."

Terry looked his thanks and with a wave to the other men faced the passageway that lead, he knew not where.

"If I can be of service to the illustrious one," called Lu Fong, "it shall be my pleasure to serve him."

Terry turned only long enough to thank Lu Fong, then he ducked into the tunnel and started the long, unknown quest for Dolores.

"Wait!" shouted the Dwarf. "I come, too. You look for the lady and I search for my perfidious brother, to taunt him with my freedom."

Terry did not wait, but the Dwarf reached his side before they were down the first flight of swinging stairs that started them on their way to the hidden and forbidden depths of the Underworld where Buckwell had fled with Dolores.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SHRINE OF THE GOLDEN DOOR

BENEATH the crooked, tangled streets of San Francisco's Chinatown lived another world. A world that was hidden and forbidden, with all the mystery of old China. An underworld—a shadowland—where vice and desire went hand in hand. It was a melting pot of outcasts, with scarcely a face that was wholly sane and healthy.

And in the very heart of this underground community was a meeting place reserved for a chosen few; for the minority whose worldly wealth had reached the point where it could buy whatever the heart desired. Guarded approaches led from a dozen directions, like the spokes of a wheel, with this shrine of evil mystery as the hub. "The Shrine of The Golden Door," it was called. But to those denizens of the underworld who were not permitted to enter its sacred and mysterious interior, it had been dubbed

"The Den of a Thousand Sins." As apt an expression as could be found.

What mad notion possessed Buckwell; when he escaped from the wrath of the bosses and the Chinamen he had wronged, forcing Dolores to go with him; he probably did not know himself. His most urgent idea was to flee. But where? He tried to decide as he and San Toy alternately pushed and pulled Dolores along the dimly lighted passage that lead from the back of his private shrine. The power of the tong leaders was great. The long arm of their authority reached to the innermost depths of the underworld. No place was safe from their prying eyes.

No place save one. Buckwell's eyes lighted with keen anticipation as he thought of "The Den of a Thousand Sins." Here he would be safe. Not even the influence of the tong leaders was great enough for them to violate the sacred laws of its shrine, that gave protection to all who were within its walls. He smiled eagerly as he urged Dolores to a greater haste. What would happen after he left its protecting walls was another matter, but that evil day would be postponed as long as possible.

They emerged from the narrow passage along which they had been traveling and entered a broader one that was evidently a main thoroughfare for the net work of smaller ones that led into it. Here for the first time they encountered some of the dwellers of this underground city. Slant eyed Celestials shuffling along gazed at them curiously, but no one accosted them or offered to interfere in anyway.

Dolores was half dead with terror and weariness. Her tired brain was in a daze. The events of the last day passed before her like the phantasy of a fevered dream. She tried to struggle from Buckwell's grasp, but her feeble strength was not equal to the task. With a sob of resignation she permitted herself to be dragged along.

Presently they turned aside from the main passage and entered a narrow one that wound so tortuously it was impossible to tell the direction in which they were going. Suddenly an iron door blocked their progress. Buckwell tapped on its surface in queer fashion. A small panel opened and the wrinkled features of an old Chinese woman peered out at them. She recognized

Buckwell and without delay opened the door for them to enter.

A carpeted passageway faced them. This widened gradually until it disappeared entirely into a huge semicircular room luxuriously furnished. Apparently it was an outer hall or reception room, because several doors on the inner side indicated that the main chamber was somewhere beyond.

Here they were met by a hard-faced, painted woman. She was elaborately gowned and greeted Buckwell with a mingling of familiarity and great respect. "But whom have we here?" she crooned softly as she took hold of Dolores' arm.

"She, my dear Madam," replied Buckwell, "is a pearl of great price. A princess of Spain whose haughty pride repulsed the advances of a certain man of influence, and whose foolish tongue betrayed an innermost secret of his heart. Guard her well and see that she is most becomingly gowned, for I have need of her later in the evening."

With the faithful San Toy on one side and the painted Madam on the other, Dolores was half led, half carried to an inner chamber where she was unceremoniously deposited on a low divan.

"The young woman seems exhausted. It will be better if we leave her to rest for awhile. Later on she will perhaps be more tractable and more pleasing to those who are interested in her," said the Madam with the wisdom of much experience in such matters.

"Come San Toy," she continued, "see that she is not disturbed, and I will see that she is well guarded."

How long she lay on the couch, Dolores had no idea. Her remembrance of the last hour was but a hazy dream, in which a Chinese girl, a painted woman and the hated Buckwell were the outstanding characters. Terry was far away, somewhere in the dim past, but she was unable to determine where she had last seen him. Try as hard as she would, she could not bring him into the present. She tossed restlessly and an occasional moan escaped her lips. Presently she slept and her sleep was the deep slumber of a tired child.

She awakened with a start and jumped to her feet. The rest had cleared her tired brain. With feverish activity she pieced together the events of the last few hours. She knew that she was in Buckwell's power,

but where, she did *not* know. She determined to escape if it was humanly possible. Approaching the door, she opened it cautiously. The grinning face of a Chinaman leered at her as she shrank back in dismay. The door was guarded. She would have to wait.

A moment later the door opened softly and the Madam entered.

"Well my dear, I'm glad to see that you have rested. Come with me and we'll find a gown for you that will be more suitable than the one you are wearing." Her voice was silken in its smoothness.

Dolores arose obediently. Her mind was actively alert but she had determined to assume a willing attitude until a more favorable opportunity of escape presented itself.

Madam smiled graciously as she conducted her beautiful charge from the room.

After Buckwell had left Dolores to the tender mercies of Madam, he disappeared behind a curtained doorway and sought the manager of the Golden Door.

That worthy individual greeted Buckwell courteously and they retired to a small table, out of hearing of the other inmates of

the room, where Buckwell spoke in earnest whispers. The manager listened politely but his fat and oily countenance was impassive as Buckwell pleaded:

"It will be an interesting diversion for your guests."

The manager shook his head. "I cannot do it. To-night is the Feast of Desire and I dare not risk the displeasure of my guests."

Buckwell frowned. Then as if another argument suggested itself, he smilingly answered, "But I will be glad to give you a percentage of the proceeds."

The manager's eyes gleamed avariciously. "How much?" he queried.

"Ten per cent!" Buckwell responded.

"No! It is not enough." And he moved as if to arise.

Buckwell reached out a detaining hand. "Twenty then! But no more. I will try another way first." His voice had the hint of a threat which the manager was quick to notice.

"Very well," he replied. "Let it be twenty." They shook hands in agreement.

Back in the maze of underground pas-

sages, Terry and the dwarf raced madly along in pursuit of Buckwell and Dolores. They were certain of the road by which he had left the shrine room but they did not know which way he had gone after entering the main tunnel. As they ran, the dwarf now and then stopped a passing Chinaman and spoke to him in Chinese, but with no success. It was fruitless to proceed any farther in their headlong, heedless fashion, and they sat down to discuss the best thing to do.

"There is one more chance," said the dwarf. "The Shrine of The Golden Door is an evil place that is frequented by my unworthy brother but I do not believe that even he would dare to risk taking the young lady to that infamous place."

"Buckwell would dare anything," replied Terry. "Come, let's try it." And with the dwarf pushing ahead they continued at a faster pace than before.

The iron door leading into the Den of a Thousand Sins blocked their progress. The dwarf knocked. The panel opened and the same wrinkled face of the old Chinese woman peered down upon them. She scowled. The dwarf spoke to her rapidly

in Chinese but she scowled harder than ever.

"Here, try this," said Terry and reaching into his pocket brought out a handful of gold coins and offered them to her. Her only reply was to slam the panel in their anxious faces.

"If Dolores is in there, we'll soon know it. Come on, we'll go back and get Lu Fong. He will know of a way to get inside." And Terry grasped the dwarf by the hand and fairly dragged him along as they rapidly retraced their steps.

CHAPTER XX

THE FEAST OF DESIRE

It was a gala night in The Shrine of The Golden Door, or The Den of a Thousand Sins as it was more popularly nicknamed. All the wealthy notables of Chinatown were gathered there to celebrate the annual Feast of Desire—a revel of exotic oriental splendor that aroused jaded appetites and opened tired eyes in eager anticipation.

Within the huge circular room was an enormous table placed directly in the center. It was laden with every conceivable kind of food. Overhead a great heavy brass and crystal chandelier, ornate with scroll and dragon design, brilliantly illuminated the interior of the room.

Around the walls were soft low divans strewn with bright silk cushions. Deep Persian rugs were spread about the floor and hung from the walls where their soft rich colors reflected and subdued the brilliant light in the center.

Upon the divans a dozen or more Chinamen lolled in luxury. Some were fat and gross; others lean, sallow and evil, but all were clad in the most magnificient and colorful gowns. In front of each divan was a small low table, handsomely inlaid with mother of pearl. Each table bore a brass tray upon which were placed candies and other Oriental sweetmeats, cigarettes and curious long-stemmed pipes.

At one side of the room where it could be viewed from all the divans was a cleared space where painted girls were swaying in wild abandon to the wailing music of a reed orchestra. Over it all arose the subtle aroma of heavy incense.

It was a scene at once so fantastic and bizarre that it was hard to believe that it occured in a thriving city of the Western world. The East with all its lure and charm was transplanted to that room with a truthfulness that could not be denied.

The music ceased its wailing. The dancers left the floor. Behind the orchestra the curtains parted and the slender graceful figure of a young girl darted onto the floor. Her beautiful body was but scantily clothed in a film of pale gauze. Her limbs

were entirely bare and her luxuriant golden hair fell about her shoulders half revealing, half concealing the charming figure beneath.

The reed pipes took up their wailing. The dance began. The pleasure seeking Chinamen sat up with awakened interest. They followed every suggestive motion of the lithe swaying body as it displayed the wisdom of the ages in its interpretations. As the dance ended a low sibilant sound of indrawn breaths was plainly audible. It was followed by a burst of applause as the dancer swiftly ran through the curtained doorway. The Chinamen moved restlessly.

From another doorway Buckwell entered, accompanied by the manager. They walked to the center of the room beside the food laden table. The manager held up his hand. Every eye was turned upon them. There was a dead silence.

"By the courtesy of this gentleman," he began indicating Buckwell, "we have arranged for your pleasure this evening something out of the line of our usual entertainment. Something different. There will be an auction. You are to have the opportunity of bidding upon one of the most exquisite jewels in existence." He paused dramat-

ically. "Look!" he continued. They followed the direction of his outstretched arm.

A door opened and Dolores was thrust into the room. The door closed behind her.

She was dressed in a gorgeous tight-fitting gown that displayed every contour of her figure. Her lovely hair hung loosely about her shoulders. As she gazed at the scene before her, an agonizing look of horror crossed her face. She turned to flee but the door did not budge as she tried to force it.

Buckwell advanced toward her with a smile of appreciation for her appearance.

The manager grinned broadly.

All around the room the Chinamen sat up in eager interest.

The manager and Buckwell escorted Dolores to the banquet table. Helpless and terrified she looked around at the eager, vice-marked faces turned toward her. In vain she sought for an avenue of escape, for the sign of one friendly face. Bowing her head in shame and mortification she sobbed convulsively. But there was no pitying response. Nothing but a sea of faces and eyes that burned with desire and greed.

The manager cleared a space in the center of the table. Buckwell climbed upon it and

lifted Dolores after him. Then he faced the pleasure seekers and raising his hand for silence asked, "How much am I bid?" he smiled triumphantly as he looked down from the improvised auction block. "Who wants this lovely dove of virtue and beauty?"

Dolores shuddered.

Buckwell noticed and smirked at her in contempt.

"Fifty thousand dollars!"

Buckwell eyed the bidder with disdain.

"One *hundred* thousand dollars," said another emphatically.

"Two hundred thousand," bid another, a shriveled Chinaman.

Buckwell became interested. "Think, gentlemen, where have you ever beheld such a paragon of youthful beauty and virtue and all I'm offered is a paltry two hundred thousand dollars. Why that amount would scarcely pay for jewels to decorate her slender throat."

The bidding slowed up. But it did not mean that interest in the girl on the block had abated. She was desirable beyond question. Buckwell turned from one to the other of the active bidders—heckling—cajoling.

"Five hundred thousand dollars!" The bidder, a heavy paunchy Chinaman, grinned in anticipation of his success.

The excitement was acute. This was an enormous sum. A fortune in itself. Buckwell was very pleased.

Another figure arose and approached the table. A tall gaunt Chinaman with a hideous pock-marked face. His eyes were fairly aglitter with lust. There was a pause. Buckwell watched him invitingly for a bid.

The Chinaman scrutinized Dolores from head to foot. She shrank away from him in stark terror and looked pleadingly at Buckwell. But he ignored her and catching the roué's eye, waited patiently.

"One million dollars!" bid the old Chinaman in a clear voice.

There was an awed hush of envy and admiration. The defeated bidders glared angrily.

"In cash?" queried Buckwell beaming triumphantly.

The winner nodded complacently, then summoning the manager gave him instructions in an undertone.

The manager crossed the room and,

throwing aside a heavy curtain of magnificent silk, exposed to view the heavy steel doors of an enormous vault which he proceeded to open. It disclosed a scene beyond the wildest stretch of the imagination. The massive doors swung back and several attendants lined up and stood guard over the precious contents. The manager went inside and proceeded to select the purchase price from the wealth of gold and rare jewels that were within. Pearls, diamonds and other precious stones, as well as stacks of gold bullion, filled the vast interior. The scene beggared description.

Even Buckwell was amazed at the richness of the contents displayed before him. His eyes sparkled with greed as the manager came out of the vault and placed an armful of precious gems on the table beside him.

Dolores was seized with hopeless terror. There was no possible way for her to evade Buckwell or escape from the clutches of the lust crazed Chinaman who eyed her with the pride of possession. But she vowed that she would kill herself rather than permit anyone to come near her again.

She looked around for some means of

taking her own life. Stairways, doors, windows and curtained recesses were all guarded. She was empty handed and alone in a great room full of alien men.

Buckwell stood beneath the huge chandelier, carefully examining the jewels by its brilliant light. He was absorbed in his task. Dolores noticed his preoccupation and slipped away toward an alcove she had not noticed before. A grinning attendant barred her way. She opened another door and still another with the same result.

Buckwell quietly observed her vain attempts to escape. "And now, my dear," he said with a leering smile, "Who is there to aid you? Where is your young suitor? Why doesn't he come to your rescue? You are the last of the Vasquez! Who is there to avenge you?" He was contemptuously cruel.

Dolores backed away from him in loathing horror. There was no possible way out! In calm resignation she lifted her head proudly and stared at him with all the fierce pride of her ancestors.

"You forget Señor Buckwell! There *is* a way. There is ONE who will help me." And raising her tear-dimmed eyes to

Heaven she prayed, "Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth . . ."

Buckwell's mocking smile vanished. He moved uncomfortably. His roving glance shifted uneasily.

The room was as still as death. All eyes were turned upon the helpless young girl as she prayed to her Heavenly Father for the aid that no one on earth could or would give.

Dolores finished her prayer and stood with bowed head, waiting—waiting—

The Feast of Desire went on.

Suddenly the floor moved—rocked. The walls shook. The heavy chandelier began to sway perilously. The men eyed each other in fearful consternation. They were paralyzed with fear.

The swaying chandelier swung in a wider arc and with a fearful ripping, rending, tearing sound, broke from the ceiling and crashed down—down upon the pallid terror stricken face of Chris Buckwell.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FIRE

THERE was no sleep for anyone in San Francisco on the fatal dawn of April eighteenth, unless it was that last final sleep from which there is no awakening. A day of terror had begun. The first shock of the earthquake came at fifteen minutes after five in the morning. A second followed five minutes later. Immediately on top of this came a devastating fire that completed the destruction and ruin that had been started by the crumbling of the earth's crust.

When the red sun rose above the horizon, the magnitude of the calamity became apparent. Looking eastward from the bay everything attested to the fearful havoc wrought by quake and fire. Where once had risen noble buildings, nothing was left but frail walls, tottering chimneys, heaps of twisted iron, piles of brick and mortar. And over it all the red tongues of fire licked their way with a fury that would not be denied.

Far down under the depths of the city in the Den of a Thousand Sins surrounded by all the wild splendor of Oriental luxury, in the presence of the men he had long persecuted, and before the eyes of the beautiful girl he had sought to sell into slavery Chris Buckwell met his death. The prophecy of Old Testament Charley had been fulfilled, "You are destined to perish and decay, and this underworld of which thou art king—it too shall perish with thee."

Dolores watched in horrified awe at the still form of Buckwell where it lay crushed beneath the heavy glass chandelier. She was stunned by the sudden crash but realized that a mightier hand than hers had snatched away the desired vengeance. The Chinamen around her, who only a few minutes before were out-bidding each other in a mad desire to possess her at any price, were even more amazed than she. They stood in frightened groups muttering softly to each other. Then as the room swayed violently and the walls cracked, filling the air with dust, they fled terrified in all directions, trampling each other under foot in the mad scramble to reach the doors.

Pandemonium reigned on all sides. Do-

lores was hurled aside without a thought, as the denizens of this underground crib frantically gathered their most valued possessions and rushed away to seek safety above ground.

There was something more terrifying about this disaster, in the dark labyrinths of San Francisco's underground dens that was far greater, than the panic on the streets above. It was the fear of the unknown mingled with the terror of the unseen.

Dolores crawled painfully to her knees, from where she had been hurled by the terrified Chinamen. The dull gleam of a lamp, that through some miracle had continued to burn, cast flickering shadows that danced grotesquely across the littered floor. The once gorgeous banquet hall of the pleasure loving Chinamen was a shamble. Silken draperies had been torn from the walls and trampled under foot, tables were overturned, chairs were broken. Here and there still forms, pinned beneath fallen beams, lay sprawled like huge gorgeous butterflies. Other Chinamen besides Buckwell had gone to meet their ancestors.

What had happened Dolores did not

know. She had prayed for deliverance and wondered if this was the only answer God could give to her prayer. Some catastrophe had wrought a havoc that her bewildered brain could not grasp. Dazedly she arose to her feet and groped blindly across the room where the dim rays of the lamp faintly outlined a half open door. It was a valiant effort but more than her tired body could manage. The shock of the last few hours had been too much for her tortured nerves and with a sob of anguish she slipped to her knees. The thought of Terry roused her for a moment and she wondered if he had been able to escape. With renewed energy she struggled forward. "Dear Father in Heaven," she prayed, "give me strength to find him."

Weakly she continued to crawl toward a door. Her groping hands touched its cold iron surface. She crossed the threshold and behind her a falling beam crashed down. The shock of its fall with its closeness was the final straw that broke her ebbing strength and with a soft moan she dropped forward in a dead faint.

Outside in the room she had just left the lone lamp sputtered in despair and went out.

The whole place was in pitch blackness. Over her head and around her were heavy walls of steel. Scattered about her lay the gold and jewels of years of accumulation. The wealth of Chinatown! Dolores had crawled into the vault of Chinatown's richest mandarin and lay there silent as death, the most precious gem of them all.

Up above, half of San Francisco was being devastated. More than fifteen square miles of the city was being laid waste with a thoroughness that was appalling. Railroads and ferries stopped running, the water supply was cut off, telephone and telegraph lines were out of commission, electric power was shut off or put out of order by falling walls and quaking ground.

But the spirit of San Francisco responded nobly. The offsprings of those pioneers who endured all hardships across the plains in '49 to search for gold in the hills around San Francisco, faced this awful calamity with a courage that never faltered. Martial law was immediately declared. Dead lines were established and soldiers patrolled the streets with orders to shoot to kill any who disobeyed or were caught looting. The fire department and the police did

wonderful work and many are the stories of heroism that will live permanently in the history of the city. Buildings were dynamited in an effort to halt the fire's progress and when no more dynamite was to be found, the artillery was called for and the roar of cannons added to the city's confusion throughout the day.

Terry and Buckwell's dwarfed Chinese brother had escaped death a hundred times as they scurried through the maze of passages in their frantic effort to find Dolores. The dwarf knew where she had been taken but time after time they found their way blocked by fallen debris. Terry would not give up the search until Dolores had been found or he had perished with her. The dwarf was equally determined to find Buckwell. The years of imprisonment had kindled a hatred for Buckwell so intense that the dwarf would not be satisfied until he was sure that Buckwell had perished.

Here and there stray bits of sunshine filtered through openings overhead where some fallen beam had cleared a passage way to the open air. For the first time in its history the underworld of San Francisco was open to the light of day. Strangely

enough it seemed to symbolize the purification of sin and crime. "But it has taken an earthquake and a fire to do it," thought Terry as he continued to search.

The form of a young girl with one arm protruding from under a pile of bricks startled him for a moment. A close examination disclosed that it was not Dolores. The dwarf was like a pointer working a field for quail as he darted with prying eyes into every nook and crevice. Searching, continually searching. His progress was uncanny in one so handicapped, as he slipped through narrow passageways or climbed over obstructions with Terry's aid, ever beckoning over his shoulder to urge a greater speed.

At a sudden turn in the littered tunnel the dwarf paused with an abruptness that nearly precipitated Terry over him. He was bending low over the body of a handsomely dressed Chinaman. His beautiful silk cloak oddly conspicuous amid the dirt and refuse that lay around him on all sides. In his hands was clenched a small leather bag and from its mouth a handful of diamonds lay scattered beside him. The dwarf calmly released the tense fingers and pick-

ing up the precious stones put them back in the bag and stuffed it into his pocket. The looting of the dead was punishable with instant death but Terry had no thought of turning the dwarf over to anyone for such an end. The dwarf had no compunctions about pocketing the gems. He turned to Terry with a grin of satisfaction as he said, "I know him. He was big Tong leader. No good. Come on, I think we near now."

They were. A few steps farther along the passage and they emerged into a large room. The banquet hall of the Den of a Thousand Sins was before them.

It was the very room in which just a short time before Dolores had been exhibited to the amorous eyes of the lewd, pleasure seeking Chinamen. The very jewels that were the price of her purchase from Buckwell were strewn over the floor. But Terry did not know it. Over head a single beam of sunlight found its way through the ruins and shed an unearthly gleam of light over the dust filled room.

Terry looked about. All around him were signs of ruined Oriental luxury. Even amid the awful wreckage of fallen walls and ceilings the lavish furnishings were dimly

discernible. He could make out the forms of several Chinese as they lay half-pinned under the mass of fallen bricks and plaster. The dwarf flitted from one to the other in a vain effort to identify his brother. The slowly shifting sun as slowly moved the single ray that filtered through from above.

A sudden shout of triumph brought Terry whirling around.

The dwarf was dancing madly around a table in the center of the room. And as he danced he pointed at a body that lay across the table, crushed by the falling of the huge chandelier. As Terry followed the direction of the outstretched arm, the single ray of light rested for a moment like the finger of God, on the distorted upturned countenance of Chris Buckwell.

Terry crossed the room in a bound. His heart gave a jump of joy at the thought that Dolores must be near. With renewed hope he continued to search frantically, stopping now and then to call, "Dolores! Dolores! Where are you? It is Terry!"

But only the exultant voice of the dwarf answered as he continued his mad dance before the body of Buckwell saying, "And so my brother we meet again! But this time I

am free and you are confined in a smaller cage than your selfishness provided for me." His wild laughter echoed through the room.

"Stop that crazy racket, you fool!" thundered Terry, half crazed himself at the thought that Dolores too might lie crushed to death beneath those very walls.

But the dwarf was heedless of anything save the sweetness of his revenge and the joy of his freedom.

"Dolores! Dolores!" Terry again called loudly in the faint hope that his voice might reach her. He stopped to listen for an answering cry, and instead heard the sound of men's voices coming nearer and nearer along the cluttered passage he had recently traveled. With a pang of dismay he realized that it was probably soldiers searching the ruins for anyone that might still be alive. If they found him he knew that he might be shot as a looter. The dwarf apparently had the same thought, for stopping only long enough to hurl a vile curse at the body of Buckwell he disappeared like a shadow amid the ruins.

Terry quickly sought a place of concealment. He did not want to meet the soldiers if he could help it. He much preferred to

continue the search for Dolores without the restricting hand of the law over him. His moving glance took in a half open door, partially concealed by a fallen beam. Picking his way carefully across the threshold he stumbled over a body that lay just inside the doorway. He paused and looked down. "Dolores!—Thank God I have found you!" His cry of joy quickly changed to grief as he knelt by the silent figure of his loved one. "Dolores! Speak to me, dear. It is Terry." He bent over and kissed her tenderly. She stirred uneasily. The movement, slight as it was, galvanized Terry into instant action and lifting her gently in his arms, he carried her out of the vault toward that ray of sunshine that still flickered through from the upper world.

Fearful that he would be unable to get her out of the jungle of fallen débris, Terry called loudly for help. His shout was answered almost immediately by the soldiers who were advancing toward him. With his precious burden held tightly in his arms he staggered forward to meet them. He had found Dolores and she was alive! Nothing else mattered, not even the hazards of reaching the upper world.

CHAPTER XXII

TODAY

THE ashes of disaster have blown away. The Barbary Coast, Old Chinatown and that mile of hell, the Cocktail Route, are no more. A new and glorious city arose, as if by magic, from the still smoking ruins—a city of homes and of prosperity—the bustling, thriving San Francisco of to-day.

Seven months after the city had ceased to smoulder, almost to the very day, the worthy citizens of San Francisco literally girded their loins to purge the city in dead earnest. They had long been familiar with the graft that was rampant in municipal politics and the city's administration had been the subject of much public denunciation.

On the fifteenth day of November, 1906, the District Attorney's office held the Mayor of San Francisco and one of his political bosses under indictment for extortion. The same day President Roosevelt and the Federal Government announced to the press

that they would immediately prosecute certain San Francisco officials for appropriating relief funds. San Francisco's house cleaning had begun in earnest.

The little town of Searchlight, Nevada, had contributed the sum of $1085.00 for the relief of the destitute sufferers in the stricken city. This amount in cash had been turned over to Wells Fargo express for delivery. The package was addressed to the Mayor of San Francisco in person with the request that it be delivered to the relief committee. The express company secured the Mayor's signed receipt for the money. But for some strange reason the Relief Committee never received a penny of it. "Ghoulish Graft" the papers dubbed it.

About this time the worthy Mayor felt that the climate of Europe would be much better for his constitution and booked a costly suite on the Cunard liner "Carouna", stopping at the Waldorf in New York on the way, where he lived luxuriously.

It was but a short time after this that His Honor the Mayor was indicted. The Grand Jury returned five counts against him, among which was one from the Poodle Dog that charged His Honor with demanding

money from the proprietor, one Tony Banco. Bail was fixed at $50,000.00 or $10,000.00 for each count.

Buckwell was dead and beyond the reach of man made laws. A Higher Court had passed judgment on his case and the verdict had been written. But his followers had been well taught and the real truth of their machinations was held up to the light of publicity for all to see. Buckwell had been the sinister power behind San Francisco's graft. Even the Mayor had been his willing tool. Buckwell had found him when he was the leader of an orchestra in a San Francisco theater and he had been literally swept into office at the head of the Labor ticket by the sheer weight of Buckwell's influence.

While Buckwell had ruled San Francisco by proxy, he had ruled it to his profit and to the profit of those who played the game with him. The indictment of his followers spelt the beginning of the end of corruption. It was a disappointing twist of Fate to the reformers that he could not have lived to witness the demolition of the elaborate system of graft that he had labored so hard to build up.

At the old Vasquez rancho overlooking

the new San Francisco that was rising from below it, Dolores was making a slow but steady battle back to health. The exhausting strain of her series of terrible experiences had shattered her nerves. Terry's daily presence did much to reawaken her to an interest in what was going on. Also the old peon's faithful attendance upon her left nothing to be desired. He was her devoted slave.

Buckwell's name was never mentioned. The occasional visits of Brandon were the only reminder of the dreadful past. But Brandon too had seen the light. His skilled legal mind had been able to conceal any connection of himself with the late boss of Old San Francisco, and his keen brain had become aligned with those who were struggling to remove all traces of the former condition. Brandon's services in connection with the Vasquez Rancho had been invaluable and it was largely through his efforts that Dolores still retained possession of her ancestral acres.

The period of Dolores' recuperation was one of struggling impatience for Terry. He loved her passionately, yet with a tender devotion that brought the tears to her eyes.

Their marriage was only a question of time, yet his ardent love was hard to keep in check during this enforced interval. At night when he wheeled her chair in from the rose garden, to the big living room, his evening ritual was, "Dolores, dear, when can we be married?"

And as she gave him the tenderest of all good-night kisses, her response came soft and low, "It won't be very long now, Terry."

* * * * * * *

Years have passed. No trace of the Old San Francisco remains. From out the piles of brick and mortar have arisen a canyon of great office buildings. The finest of police departments patrol the well paved streets and the political administration of this New San Francisco is above reproach.

Dolores and Terry are married.

Under the new master's energetic direction the broad Vasquez heritage has become a humming hive of industry. Fields are plowed and vineyards are in a wonderful state of fruition.

As Dolores and Terry stand, with arms around each other, on the hillside overlooking the city Terry steals a sly look at

her and says mischievously, "Have you ever been sorry that the Vasquez name is no more—since you exchanged it for O'Shaughnessy?"

Dolores smiles up at him gently as she shakes her head, saying, "No, Terry! But see, the Vasquez blood flows on—perhaps some day to accomplish even greater deeds than in the past."

He follows the direction of her upraised arm and their admiring gaze rests upon the old peon. He is harnessed to a small wagon with a tiny piece of rope. A heavenly smile of satisfaction is on his face.

Seated in the wagon is a husky four year old youngster. On his head is perched a paper soldier's cap and in both chubby hands, almost more than he can manage, is raised aloft the great sword of the Vasquez.

Finis.

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